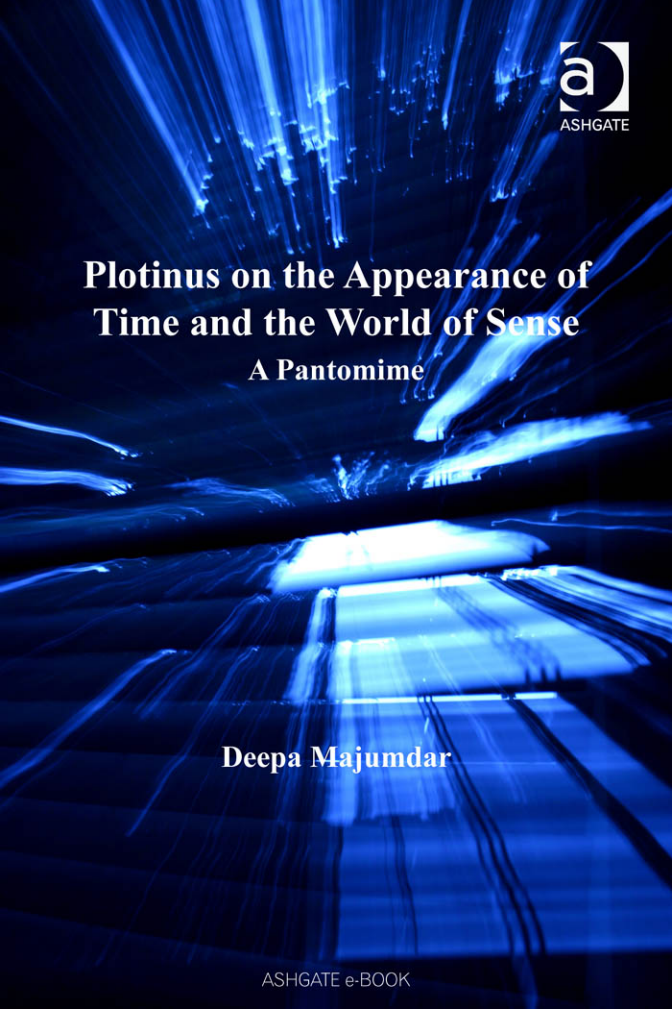
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Plotinus on the Appearance of Time and the World of Sense
A Pantomime
Deepa Majumdar
ASHGATE e-BOOK

PLOTINUS ON THE APPEARANCE OF TIME AND THE WORLD OF SENSE

Dr. Majumdar provides the most thorough, rigorous, precise, organized, and insightful account I have read of Plotinus' many remarks and discussions regarding soul and some related concepts. She thoroughly identifies every (so far as I can tell) significant distinction and discussion pertaining to the nature and function of soul found in the Enneads. She discerns beyond previous scholars certain overlooked, subtle linguistic and conceptual representations of soul and its activities in Plotinus' treatises. And her like treatment of Plotinus' conception of Self is unique in the contemporary literature on Plotinus.

Michael F. Wagner, Professor of Philosophy,
The University of San Diego, USA

Dr. Majumdar's knowledge and command of the sources, both primary and secondary, is particularly impressive. Her argument throughout the book is presented with a remarkable vigour and intensity, and yet in a very clear way, which also makes the book accessible to non-specialists. Overall, this book can be not only a nice introduction to Plotinus but also of much help to anyone interested in the problem of time and temporality as related to the structure of the self.

Professor Dimitri Nikulin, Department of Philosophy, New School University,
New York, USA

This book will add to our knowledge of one of the most important Neoplatonic thinkers. Future scholars will refer to and build on what Majumdar has written.

John F. Finamore, Professor and Chair of Classics at the University of Iowa, USA

In her book, Plotinus on the Appearance of Time and the World of Sense: A Pantomime, *Dr. Majumdar takes a sophisticated approach to Plotinus, displaying very thorough familiarity with both the works of Plotinus himself and all the major secondary literature in the area, including the work of some often neglected scholars.*

Eric D. Perl, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Loyola Marymount University,
USA

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A Pantomime

DEEPA MAJUMDAR

ASHGATE

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Preface

What bearing do the *Enneads* of Plotinus (ca. 204–270 A.D.) have for our times? What hortative message would the philosopher of Lycopolis bring to us today? What sparks a tryst between this seminal thinker and scholars from the twenty first century? Is contemporary internationalism a magnificent extrapolation of third century Alexandrian and Roman cosmopolitanism, yet of the same essence? Can the gulf between the two be surmounted in the solitary confines of the scholar's mind? Notwithstanding the historicity that ushers Plotinus to our century, perhaps all ultimate answers lie in the mystery of noetic inspiration, for the abode of the perpetual muse is the Plotinian intelligible world – the ultimate source of inspiration.

The thirteen chapters in this book were written over a period of four years, beginning in 2003. They were inspired by the tacit connections between chapters eleven through thirteen of the seventh tractate of Plotinus' *Ennead III* ("On Eternity and Time") and the rest of the *Enneads*.[1] They were written with two main foci: an application of Plotinus' genus-species structure of soul to his cosmology and an exploration of *tolma*, the restlessness of soul, and the risk of apostasy in Plotinian emanation.

I am grateful to Professors John Finamore, Michael Wagner, Eric Perl, Dimitri Nikulin, and Silvia Dapia for reading my manuscript. I am indebted to Purdue University North Central for supporting me with generous summer research grants and travel grants. I thank the *International Society for Neoplatonic Studies* for their conferences. Finally, I remain grateful to the silent community of Plotinian scholars, who taught me to quieten the hermeneutic eye, let the text be its own lens, and allow Plotinus to speak for himself. I tried to *listen* and serve as a still medium for this unfiltered voice resonating through the centuries.

[1] All references to the *Enneads* are in standard form. Thus III.7(45).11 indicates the eleventh chapter of the seventh tractate of *Ennead* Three, the forty-fifth treatise in Porphyry's chronological ordering of the *Enneads*.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the tumult of our times – amidst the rational exchange and ruthless haste evident in the aura of measure governing us and the proliferation of clocks reminding us of such measure – time and the visible cosmos are denigrated to lowly tools. So great is the discord, it nearly cleaves the pairs of opposites, whipping their contrariety to a deafening roar and wrenching them apart. The chaos of the one is magnified even as it is tethered by the subjective order of the other. Thus the cacophony of the market is escalated by the very instrumental order that regulates it – the commotion of the former nearly sundered from the incoherence of the latter. In such a world, the dissonance of the outer drowns the silence of the inner and expresses itself through the arrhythmic schedules and artificial seasonality of a people exhausted by their externalization. Where the light of the objective is placed in the outer and the inner unquestioningly held mired in subjectivity, where few can afford the inward turn, how can the *experience* of time be deemed worthy or objective? The temporal regimes of science and business convince us that the time of physics is the only true and objective time – an antinomy to inner time, which must be aligned to the former and resurrected from subjectivity. Its high exchange value has so distended the dominion of the world of sense that even time – which has no sensible form – has become an analogy for the sensible object. Indeed, our intoxication with forms of matter is so keen, that the cosmos no longer seems immersed in time. Instead, time is reified to the near tangible flow of manicured moments we grasp fecklessly, more with our senses than intellect. Ever better clocks and watches demarcate this time with meticulous precision and subject us entirely to the discipline of the time of physics.

Yet, beneath the scurrying moments of this discordant and objectified universe, there flows that constant contemplation, transporting us unremittingly to the One. No human artifice can thwart this flow, which pulsates with a quietude that averts our attention from the outer, to the idealistic *inner* roots of time. Amidst the richness of a growing silence, we align the time of physics to the truer rhythm of discursive thought and experience the auspicious seasonality of an ideal time that mandates a right moment for every activity of soul – until we *realize* the evanescence of time. As the silence deepens, we reach that crowning moment when the universe becomes our *corpus mysticum*. The opacity dims, we leave behind the clamor and dust of time, awaken to the eternal forms, then discard the apparel of the two hypostases – Intellect and soul – and stand unmasked before the One, which dissolves us in its light.

In this appetitive age, when the unalloyed mystical is shrouded by its antinomy and a cynical nihilism threatens the inviolability of a universal moral ground, we posit, in its stead, as sources of authority – not just forms of matter – but also, anthropomorphic regimes of time. Yet, this very exaltation is at once also a desecration, for our ecocidal tendencies have long been aimed, not only at the earth and its environment, but also at time. Like the earth, time too appears haggard – a pitiless alacrity reduces it to the atomized debris of a temporal wasteland. Clearly, the time and universe of our experience, which have long ceased to be mantic, stand in dire need of roots that are *idealistic*. More than anyone else, it is perhaps Plotinus (ca. 204–270 A.D.)[1] – the philosopher of Lycopolis,[2] said to be father of both western mysticism and the Greek philosophical movement known as Neoplatonism[3] – who gives us such roots in his portrayal of the appearance of time (*chronos*) and the world of sense (*kosmos aisthêtos*) in the *Enneads*.[4] Plotinus infuses idealism by making time and the cosmos adumbrations of *ideal* transcendental paradigms and by

[1] As Rist suggests, Plotinus' date of birth is somewhat unreliable. Armstrong dates Plotinus' birth at A.D. 205. J.M. Rist, *Plotinus. The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 3; *Plotinus: Porphyry on Plotinus Ennead I*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 7, note 1.

[2] That Plotinus' birthplace was indeed Lycopolis remains somewhat suspect as Armstrong notes. See *Ennead I*, 2–3, note 1.

[3] Neoplatonism is also described in other ways: by Turetzky, as the philosophical bridge between late antiquity and the Middle Ages and by Blumenthal, as the "Platonism of late antiquity". See P. Turetzky, *Time* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 43; H.J. Blumenthal, "Platonism in Late Antiquity" in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 1. As Blumenthal explains, the term Neoplatonism is a modern one that first appeared in English and French in the 1830s. Scholars (Blumenthal, Gerson) have also noted that Plotinus would have been confounded at being called the founder of Neoplatonism, for he thought of himself only as a Platonist, pure and simple. Blumenthal notes that it has been suggested that this traditional view of Plotinus – as the founder of Neoplatonism – is in fact false. Rather, Plotinus is just one of the thinkers of the third century, whose views were not the direct ancestor of later Neoplatonism. Later Neoplatonists were more liable than Plotinus to accept irrational, non-philosophical explanations and procedures. See Blumenthal's "Plotinus in Later Platonism", in *Soul and Intellect*, 214. Also see *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3, where Gerson observes that Plotinus would have been deeply disturbed to be characterized as the founder of something called "Neoplatonism".

[4] Plotinus' masterpiece is a body of treatises, divided into six *Enneads*, each with nine tractates (hence *Ennead* from the Greek word for the number nine), arranged artificially by his student, Porphyry, who chose the six-nine division because of pleasure derived in the "symmetry of sacred number characteristic of his age". See Armstrong's "Preface", in *Ennead I*, x.

conceiving them as terminal progeny,[5] appearing at the end of a procession that derives all the way from Plotinus' first principle and highest *ideal* – the One (*to Hen*) or the Good (*to Agathon*), a term coined by Plato in the *Republic*.

At once anterior to multiplicity, finite being, and life and yet the source of all life and being, the One is also the *telos* of the *epistrophic* yearning of the ascending self. The One and the two lower principles irradiated from it – Intellect (*nous*)[6] and soul (*psuchê*) – are the three hypostases[7] or enduring metaphysical foundations of the generated worlds, described by Schürmann as the three punctuations of reality.[8] Intellect and soul are verities, permeated by the five all-pervading primary genera – substance, movement, rest, sameness and otherness (VI.2(43).8.). The procession from the One continues downwards below these real beings and now it is primarily

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[5] "Progeny" and "progenitor" may not be entirely accurate, given the complex nuances of the causal aspect of the procession from the One. Yet, Plotinus himself uses "offspring" and "parent" in chapters V.1(10).6–7. In Chapter 7 he makes the point that when a being like Intellect is so great a power and perfect, it cannot be without "offspring". Thus, Schroeder observes that for Plotinus, the world as reflected image is *begotten* not made. See F.M. Schroeder, *Form and Transformation: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 40. In the present work, "progeny" and "progenitor" are used for ease of exposition, while bearing in mind the complexities of Plotinian causality. In the emanative flow "progeny" is the begotten subsequent and "progenitor" its immediate generator and causative prior.

[6] *Nous* is varyingly translated as "Spirit", "Reason" and "Understanding". "Intellect" has been regarded by commentators as a problematic translation of *nous*. Armstrong chose "Intellect" as the best available translation of *nous* – to be understood like the Scholastic term *intellectus* rather than *ratio*. Intellect then means the activity of a direct, non-discursive grasp by the mind of its object of thought. See Armstrong's "Preface" in *Ennead I*, xviii. More recently, Sinnige uses "Intellect" – in accordance with "a prevailing tradition" – but adds that no adequate translation is feasible for a concept that in one word carries so much "fundamental" theory. See Th.G. Sinnige's *Six Lectures on Plotinus and Gnosticism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), vii. Schürmann also uses "Intellect". See R. Schürmann, "The Philosophy of Plotinus. Doctor Reiner Schürmann's Course Lectures", inventory established by Pierre Adler (New York: The New School for Social Research, Department of Philosophy, 1994, photocopied), 3.

[7] As Gerson notes, it is more accurate to use principles (*archai*) – as Plotinus himself frequently does – and not hypostases, when referring to the One, Intellect and Soul. Plotinus applies the term hypostasis to a variety of entities, such as wisdom, matter, love, and numbers. Thus "hypostasis" is perhaps too general for the One, Intellect, and Soul. See L.P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3. Oosthout also contends that in Plotinus' work, the term *hypostasis* has a rather general and broad sense. Thus in individual cases, its meaning should depend on the context in which it occurs. See H. Oosthout, *Modes of Knowledge and the Transcendental: An Introduction to Plotinus Ennead 5.3 [49]* (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1991), 19. In the present work, I have used both "hypostasis" and "principle", for ease of exposition.

[8] Schürmann, 53, also notes that strictly speaking the One is not a hypostasis, insofar as this term implies gradations. Yet it is *the* hypostasis for it stands under everything else.

through the hypostasis soul that Intellect generates the denizens of the realm of becoming. Although this latter genesis abides by the central motifs of emanative *poiesis*, it brings with it a conceptual hiatus. Making is no longer a simple twofold process of overflow of activity (*energeia*) from the perfected prior and derivation of form by return in contemplation to the prior. Plotinus adds a few definitive milestones – a *tolmatic* impetus stirs soul into a motion that dislodges time from its noetic rest; the species levels of soul are now implicated, as also the self *qua* "we"; "we" construct time as an image of eternity; and the World Soul grows insubstantially diluted as it bequeaths *logoi* on to formless matter, to form the ensemble of ensouled bodies that constitutes the cosmos.

In the seventh tractate of *Ennead III*, given the title "On Eternity and Time" (*Peri Aiônos kai Chronou*) – which in Porphyry's chronology of his master's works, is the last among the treatises from Plotinus' middle period, written in his prime[9] – Plotinus critically inspects the cardinal texts on eternity and time in Greek classical philosophy in addition to presenting his own philosophy.[10] These include Plato's distinction between time and eternity in the *Timaeus* (37C–39A), Parmenides' case for a timeless being underlying Plato's distinction (B8.1–22), and Aristotle's thoughts on the nature of time in the *Physics* (4.10–14).[11] As Armstrong notes, this treatise is based firmly on our own experience of time and eternity here below and to take experience, reason, and tradition into account was characteristic of Plotinus.[12]

In Chapter 11of *Ennead* III.7(45), beginning with the idealistic roots of time, Plotinus first uses the *poietic* tools somewhat characteristic of the procession from the One, to depict the logically simultaneous appearance of time and the world of sense – and then defines time as an intimate aspect of soul – as the "life of soul in a

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[9] In "Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books", *Ennead I*, Chapters 5–6, Porphyry suggests that the treatises written by Plotinus during his middle period, when Porphyry was with him, reveal his power at its height. However as scholars, like Helleman-Elgersma and Rist, 9, wryly comment, Porphyry's judgment may have to do with his self importance. See W. Helleman-Elgersma, *Soul-Sisters: A Commentary on Enneads IV 3 (27), 1–8 of Plotinus* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980), 55, note 18.

[10] As Nikulin notes, III.7(45) may be regarded, not only as an explicit commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* (to which it refers explicitly at least 15 times), but also an implicit commentary on the *Parmenides*. Plato's *Sophist* also plays a key role in understanding the nature of eternity in Plotinus. Thus Plotinus' discussion of eternity is more an integral exegesis of Plato's insights dispersed through various dialogues. See D. Nikulin, "Plotinus on Eternity", *Le Timée de Platon*, A. Neschke-Hentschke (ed.) (Paris: Éditions Peeters Louvain, 2000), 17.

[11] S.K. Strange, "Plotinus on the Nature of Eternity and Time", in *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*, L.P. Schrenk (ed.) (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 22.

[12] A.H. Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", in *Gnosis, Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978), 119.

movement of passage from one way of life to another" (III.7(45).11).[13] Inspired by Plato's definition of time as the "moving image of eternity" in the *Timaeus* (37D–38B), *Ennead* III.7(45)11–13, in turn, is a meditation on this definition and thus the inception for Plotinus' thoughts on eternity and time, leading to his own profound contribution to the philosophy of eternity and time in the western tradition. Plotinus enriches Plato's definition by silhouetting this "moving image" as a *homonymous* icon of eternity,[14] propaedeutic to two ways of life – time is the *life* of soul in movement, in homonymous imitation of eternity, the unextended *life* of Intellect at rest. As Armstrong observes, Plotinus' thesis in *Ennead* III.7(45) is one of two major discussions of time in the extant works of ancient philosophers – the other being that by Aristotle (*Physics* IV.10–14. 217b–224a). Armstrong notes further that although Plotinus confronts the Stoic (Zeno's and Chrysippus') and Epicurean views of time (Chapters 7–10), his main concern is with the philosophical view already prevalent in the early Academy – that time is linked closely with the movement of the heavens and with Aristotle's view that time is the number or measure of motion.[15]

Perhaps Plotinus' deepest contribution to the philosophy of time is not so much his critically modified vision of Plato's view as his inference that time is evanescent – an opaque iconostasis to be left behind in the soaring flight of the self. Although this indirect insight is the highest possible – arising as it does from a mystical summit – Plotinus devotes only portions of III.7(45) to the abolition of time (Chapters 12 and 13) – and even this is non-mystical, hypothetical and inferential.[16] In Chapters 11–13 of III.7 (45), it is mainly the more *prosaic* nature of time that Plotinus seeks to understand: a nature that lies between the two extremes of mystical evanescence and the subjective experience of time by the historical self.[17] This belies Plotinus' customary predilection for essentials over

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[13] Smith distinguishes two times in Plotinus' thought: (1) "real time", or the life of soul, and (2) "manifested time", or time here, which is a manifestation of "real time". In a sense, "real time" is in between eternity and the "manifested time" of the world of sense. Smith also discerns between the "soul-life" of time and the "entimed life of the embodied soul". See A. Smith, "Soul and Time in Plotinus", in *Psukhe – Seele – Anima*, J. Holzhausen (ed.) (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1998), 335, 340.

[14] Gerson, 120.

[15] Armstrong claims that there were no significant changes or development of thought in the philosophy of time, between Aristotle, whom Plotinus criticizes in Chapters 9, 12 and 13, and Plotinus. See *Plotinus Ennead III*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 293.

[16] This seeming neglect is at odds with Plotinus' rich rendering of other aspects of mysticism. In fact, even the reversal of procession in Chapters 12 and 13 is non-mystical for it pertains to a cosmic process rather than the *epistrophic* yearning of the individual soul. Thus it has to be hypothetical, for procession cannot in fact be reversed. As a cosmic process its reversal is infeasible. In emanative terms the structure of the hypostases is fixed.

[17] Plotinus' focus on the prosaic aspect of time and his seeming neglect of its mystical

peripherals. Yet, the fact that he probes more this pedestrian aspect of time is to be expected, for Plotinian time is patently immanent. Once it appears as the life of soul from its noetic fore-life, time is immanence incarnate – whenever transcended, it grows ephemeral.[18]

Plotinus affirms time and the world of sense, even as he demotes them to the realm of becoming. Thus, as Armstrong notes, Plotinus' view of time is positive. Time is not the devourer, as often in Greek thought, but rather that which enables generated beings to attain fullness of life and perfection. The temporal-material world, though almost at the nadir of existence, is a noble and necessary part of the whole – the best possible image of the eternal intelligible.[19] Drawing from Plato's *Timaeus*, the universe for Plotinus is comparable with a living being – it is an organized whole, with intelligence and soul.[20] Like Plato, Plotinus demotes this visible world of sense to an ensemble of images – each an adumbration of its noetic form – reflected in the mirror of matter, as "phantoms in a phantom" (III.6(26).7). This makes the universe somewhat different from time, for the transcendental paradigm which time imitates is not its noetic form – and of course time has none – but eternity, which is intelligible through participation in Intellect.[21] Moreover, the universe is corporeal, unlike time and nature (*phusis*) and the product and icon of the true, eternal universe of Intellect. As its archetype, Intellect is the *cause* of the universe.[22] The universe exists by means of it and comes into existence "everlastingly" (III.2(47).1), by which, Plotinus must mean eternally and not sempiternally.[23] The universe is the animated sacrament of the invisible world,[24] a god by the power of "all soul" (V.1(10).2) and the *corpus* of the World Soul, to be discerned from nature, which has varied meanings in the *Enneads* – the "constitution" of a thing or a principle (the "nature" of the body, the

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dimensions may have to do with Armstrong's "subjective" suspicion that Plotinus was not "overwhelmingly" interested in the philosophy of time. See Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 120.

[18] The only transcendental aspect of time is its fore-life, when it is at rest with eternity in real being and is not yet time. See III.7(45).11.

[19] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 121.

[20] As Bréhier notes: Plotinian metaphysics is "centered" in a certain astronomical theory of the sensible world originating in the thought of Eudoxus – a geocentric view in which concentric spheres constitute the heavens. See É. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. J. Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 44.

[21] Nikulin, 24.

[22] Of course Intellect is the progenitor and cause of matter, nature, time and the world of sense. However, Intellect often mediates through the edifice of soul and nature. It is in their roles as intermediaries that these latter are sometimes also referred to as "progenitors" in the present work.

[23] Soul descends to a pre-cosmic, sempiternal discursive state when it constructs time, but the making of time and the cosmos, in itself is eternal.

[24] See Armstrong's "Preface", in *Ennead I*, xxvi.

"nature" of form, the "nature" of the Good), hypostasis (the One as the first "nature"), and the lower part of the World Soul, functioning in plants and the earth and closely associated with the generative-vegetative soul in man and animal. In this last capacity, nature is a formative principle (*logos*), a form (*eidos*), and in a qualified sense, a soul. It is this nature that "contemplates" the visible cosmos.[25] Like time, nature too is distinct from matter and body. In III.2(47).3, the universe can indeed claim a divine origin, for it is derived from Intellect, through the edifice of soul and its lower part, nature. The universe revolves in cycles, one revolution contains all the *logoi* and when it repeats itself, it reiterates the same things, in accordance with the same *logoi* (V.7(18).1). As the "sphere of the All", which possesses the soul that aspires to the Good, it moves by a natural aspiration directed to that which it is outside of. It is "an enfolding and surrounding it on every side with itself". Hence, it moves in a circle (IV.4(28).16).

Arguing against the Gnostic view of the cosmos and inspired by Plato's cosmology in the *Timaeus*, Plotinus ascribes to the universe a divine perfection, arising from the fullness of its being.[26] It is complete and self-sufficient because all things are in it. Its denizens include plants, animals, the nature of all things that have come into being, many gods, populations of spirits, good souls, and men who are happy in their virtue. As with Aristotle, for whom every natural thing in its own way longs for the divine and desires to share in divine life as far as it can, for Plotinus as well, everything in the universe aspires after the Good and attains it only in proportion to its own power (III.2(47).3). One of the main disputes Plotinus had with the Gnostics was their valuation of the material cosmos and its maker.[27] Unlike the latter, who vilify the "Demiurge", assign a beginning and end to the world of sense, and deny intelligence to the suns and the stars,[28] Plotinus refuses to blame the cause of this universe and denies that Intellect is a deliberative agent. The hypostasis soul does not commit a transgression when it descends from the divine realm to continue the generation of the realm of process, for this efflux occurs by necessity. In contradistinction with the Gnostics, Plotinus extols the beauty of the universe, for it indicates the beauty of its underlying intelligible beings. He regards the universe as "everlasting" insofar as it "has never not existed" (III.2(47).1),[29] and deems the sun and other heavenly bodies divine, insofar as they are ensouled (V.1(10).2). Plotinus thus inaugurates in the third

[25] See J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 64–5.

[26] Bréhier, 165.

[27] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 113.

[28] Bréhier, 170.

[29] Plotinus believes that the universe has neither a beginning nor an end in time. For Plato, the world has a beginning – with the demiurge. However, Plato too claims perpetuity for the world – on account of the goodness of its author. As Bréhier, 44, notes, the thesis of the eternity of the world is an "essential and permanent trait" of Hellenism, in opposition to Christianity.

century, a movement towards a more "positive and world-accepting attitude", in his valuation of the material world and with the exception of Porphyry, this is perpetrated and developed by later Neoplatonists.[30]

In the eleventh chapter of the seventh tractate of *Ennead* Three (III.7(45).11), characterized by Armstrong as "light hearted" and "casual", despite its enormous importance in the history of the philosophy of time,[31] Plotinus portrays the logically conjoint genesis of time and the world of sense[32] as the *terminus* of a monistic procession of the many from the One, leading to the teeming multiplicity and warring *logoi* of the realm of process.[33] The eternal genesis of time is described by Plotinus in *Ennead* III.7(45).11–13. However, that of the visible cosmos is in several somewhat disparate accounts, dispersed across the entire chronological range of the *Enneads*. While several related issues concerning the appearance of time and the world of sense have already been addressed by commentators,[34] what may be wanting is a thorough exploration of two key

[30] As Armstrong notes, in this respect Plotinus differs from Platonists like Numenius, who was inclined to remain at the lower end of the scale of valuation of the material world. Armstrong also notes that Porphyry was inclined to revert to Numenius' position in this regard. See Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 110.

[31] *Ibid*., 120.

[32] Plotinus derives the simultaneity of the appearances of time and "heaven" from Plato's *Timaeus* (38B6–C2).

[33] This procession is fully monistic only if it includes the matter of the sense-world. Plotinus' views on the origin of matter can be complex. See Chapter 7.

[34] In the twentieth century, there have been several commentaries on Plotinus' concept of time. The more recent ones are those by Turetzky, Smith, Strange, Schürmann, Gloy, Simons and Sorabji. Some older ones are those by Manchester, Callahan, Beierwaltes, Jonas, Jaspers, Trouillard, Rau, Clark and Inge. See Turetzky, 43–55; A. Smith, "Eternity and Time", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 196–216; "Soul and Time", 335–44; Schürmann, 46–51; K. Gloy, "Die Struktur der Zeit in Plotins Zeittheorie", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 71 (1989): 303–26; J.M. Simons, "Matter and Time in Plotinus", *Dionysius* 9 (1985): 53–74; R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 161–3; P. Manchester, "Time and the Soul in Plotinus, III 7 [45], 11", *Dionysius* 2 (1978): 101–36; Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 119–21; W. Beierwaltes, *Plotin über Ewigkeit und Zeit* (Frankfurt a. M.: V. Klostermann, 1967); H. Jonas, "Plotin über Ewigkeit und Zeit: Interpretation von *Enn*. III 7", in *Politische Ordnung und Menschliches Existenz*: *Festgabe für E. Voegelin*, A. Dempf and H. Arendt (eds) (München: Beck, 1962), 295–319; K. Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers: The Original Thinkers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), 53–4 and 66–7; J. Trouillard, "The Logic of Attribution in Plotinus", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1961): 125–38; C. Rau, "Theories of Time in Ancient Philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Saint Augustine)", *The Philosophical Review* 62 (1953): 514–25; J.F. Callahan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1948), 88–148; G.H. Clark, "The Theory of Time in Plotinus", *The Philosophical Review*, 53 (Jul., 1944): 337–58; W.R.

aspects: (1) the engagement of soul and self in this genesis; (2) *tolma* and the weakening of the edifice of soul. Commentators have already studied Plotinus' thoughts concerning not only time, eternity, and the genesis of the realm of process (Beierwaltes, Jonas, Strange, Schürmann, Smith, Armstrong, Nikulin and Manchester) but also the concepts and themes lurking behind the scenes of III.7(45).11 such as soul (Deck, Blumenthal, Helleman-Ergesma, Torchia), self (O'Daly, Mamo, Gerson, Oosthout, and Sinnige), matter and evil (O'Brien, Corrigan, and Rist), *tolma* (Torchia), and the descent of the soul (Rist, Deck, Sinnige, Bowe). In this work, these related themes are explored, in the hope of constructing the tacit architectonic pillars underlying Plotinus' cosmology in III.7(45).11–13. Following Plotinus' own spirit of philosophical exegesis, a dialectical inquiry is formulated in terms of two focal theses:

(1) While Intellect engenders time and the cosmos primarily through the hypostasis soul, the World Soul and "we" also generate this realm of process. Thus the entire edifice of soul (genus and species) and self ("we") is implicated in this genesis. This raises questions about the ontological level of the "we" and the extent to which species souls invoke their genus to draw time out of its noetic rest and engender the ensouled bodies of the cosmos through the encounter between the *logoi* and matter. How does Plotinus envision the structure of soul and why do all levels of soul participate in the genesis of time and the cosmos? What is time during its fore-life and in what sense is it at rest? What are the, perhaps surreptitious, ways in which the unnamed concept of the self is present in the *Enneads* and how does it comprise the "we" in III.7(45).11? Does this "we" include only rational humans and how does the self *qua* "we" "construct" time and the cosmos? How can Plotinus' myriad accounts of the appearance of the cosmos be reconciled? What are the cardinal features of emanative *poiesis* and how is the genesis of the realm of becoming a cameo of this process? After delineating the hermeneutics of Plotinus' method, originality, heritage and legacy (Chapters 2–3) and the architectonic pillars of his cosmology – the concepts of soul, self, and the logic of Plotinian *poiesis*, Plotinus' demiurge and the appearance of nature and matter (Chapters 4–7) – questions concerning the involvement of soul and self in the genesis of time and the world of sense are addressed in Chapters 8–10, with special attention paid to III.7(45).11–13.

(2) Plotinus' thoughts on the impact of its generative acts on the edifice of soul remain, at best, ambiguous. On the one hand, soul is uncontaminated by its concourse with matter and in no way reduced by its generative acts. On the other, unlike Intellect, which abides unchanged when it makes, soul does not remain unaffected. The World Soul squanders its unity and undergoes a weakening extension. Although it is not *tolma* – but soul's down-flowing activity and *logoi* that remain the immediate causes of the genesis of time and the cosmos – the

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Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, vol. I (London: Longmans, Green and Co.,1929), 169–87.

impetus of *tolma* impinges on this genesis by thwarting some characteristic norms of emanative *poiesis*. In fact, at this threshold of the realm of becoming, psychic *tolma* might be the linchpin of psychic *poiesis*. How significant is the role of *tolma* in the procession of the many from the One and is it exacerbated at levels below real beings? How should the *tolmatic* descent of the World Soul in III.7(45).11 be assessed – is it benign and ontological, or is it a moral descent? These questions are addressed in Chapters 11–12.

Plotinus' work lends itself particularly well to the endeavor of exegesis. As Simons notes, the "systematic character" of Plotinus' philosophy is not always obvious. Insofar as he treats special problems in "thematic and occasional" treatises, there are "implicit tensions" in his work as well as "tacit connections", which Plotinus himself often fails to pursue and on occasion, even suspect.[35] It becomes the special task of the exegete to reveal these tensions and connections. As a blithe front for such covert associations, III.7(45).11 is particularly well suited for this task. The scholarship on Plotinian cosmology, time, *tolma*, soul and self has been the guiding spirit behind many chapters in this book. It is hoped that this work, in its turn, will contribute by revealing the interlacing architecture of soul, self, *poiesis*, *tolma*, and emanative loss, mutely underlying Plotinus' cosmology in *Ennead* III.7(45).11.

[35] Simons, 53.

PART I
The Hermeneutic Scene

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Chapter 2

Truth, Method, and Originality

We know that Plotinus wrote the *Enneads* only during the last sixteen to seventeen years of his life. A long preparation led to this prolific stage. While yet in his twenties, Plotinus, the critical seeker, desiring to study philosophy and disillusioned with reputable teachers in Alexandria, was directed to Ammonius (ca. 175–243 A.D.), from whom he received his training between A.D. 232–243. Ammonius, the self-taught philosopher, who wrote nothing but is said to have wanted to harmonize Plato and Aristotle,[1] taught a philosophical *attitude*, rather than a philologico-philosophical technique – an attitude that inspired Plotinus to seek contact with Persian and Indian philosophy.[2] That this education was *formative* rather than formal, perhaps an orientation towards the Good, in accordance with Plato's definition of education in *The Allegory of the Cave* (*Republic* VII. 518), is evident in the fact that even long thereafter Plotinus continued to bear the spirit of Ammonius. After arriving in Rome in A.D. 244, Plotinus founded a school, where he taught philosophy and infused his lectures with this spirit. It was only after teaching philosophy for several years that Plotinus began writing his masterpiece, the *Enneads*. Thus his earliest treatises are the result of over twenty years of studying and teaching philosophy.[3]

What bearing does this biography have on the making of the *Enneads*? To understand the roots of his philosophical method, it may be useful to apply Plotinus' unique distinction between two forms of making – *poiesis* (unplanned, effortless and contemplative making characteristic of the hypostases) and its inferior, *praxis* (ordinary deliberate making, entailing effort and action and bereft of intellectual vision). Books are not irradiated by the contemplations of their authors. Often, they call for "knowledge" characteristic of *praxis* – that is,

[1] M.L. Gatti, "Plotinus: The Platonic tradition and the foundation of Neoplatonism", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16.

[2] P.A. Meijer, *Plotinus on the Good or the One (Enneads VI,9): An Analytical Commentary* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1992), 17; Porphyry, "On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books", in *Plotinus: Porphyry on Plotinus Ennead I*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), Chapter 3.

[3] Armstrong, "Preface", in *Ennead I*, vii.

knowledge consequent upon the sensible world in the form of sensation, opinion and discursive reasoning. As a freely chosen production, writing may stem from a special resolve and it occurs in the world of sense, employing sensible objects like ink and paper – all of which are characteristics of *praxis*. No matter how incandescent Plotinus' state of inspiration may have been and even if he traversed manifold levels of reality, creating the *Enneads* only at the lowest discursive level as nothing more than a sediment of his luminosity, this work had to have been executed through contingent contacts with sensible objects, the distended mode of discursive reasoning and the disquiet of the uttered word. Yet, Plotinus' writing in the *Enneads* is so imbued with contemplation that one feels tempted to compare him with the geometers he cites, who draw figures while contemplating (III.8(30).4) – without the special resolve characteristic of *praxis*. If it is Plotinus' direct, non-discursive contemplation of the One and the higher noetic world that underlies his writing of the *Enneads* – then the object of his contemplation far surpasses its product (his written word) and the knowledge derived from such contemplation is infinitely superior to the "knowledge" characteristic of *praxis*. Perhaps Plotinus' act of writing the *Enneads* is largely *poietic* and thus identified with its concomitant contemplation. Even its attendant *praxis* – attenuated by the inspiration of the former – possibly urges towards contemplation.[4]

One indication of this *poietic* hue is the absence of premeditation. In no way was his arduous preparation calculated to aid Plotinus in accomplishing what strikes us as his highest task – the writing of the *Enneads*. Nevertheless, this apportionment of his life – between preparation and production – is an ontological clue to the quality of his written word, for it demonstrates the *poietic* logic explicated in the *Enneads* – that devoid as it is of any "levering", making is not planned. Yet, it is not left to chance either. Making must be preceded by contemplation, leading to the acquisition of fecundity, without scheming at an input-output relationship between the two. It is perhaps this logic that underlies Armstrong's comment that Plotinus' philosophy was already fully mature before he began writing. The *Enneads* were made with little to no intellectual or spiritual "levering". After all, the treatises were not intended for publication but for circulation, only among selected members of Plotinus' school.[5] Plotinus' preparation could not have been anything more than the innocuous explorations of the true seeker and the preamble of his philosophical life, leading – not to a career – but a vocation and the teleological unfolding and simplification of this life. His ardent search, the slaking of this thirst under the tutelage of Ammonius and the years of teaching must have fructified in the sustained flow of the terse, meditative words of the *Enneads* – words that Porphyry tells us Plotinus delivered in a tone of

[4] For the difference between *poiesis* and *praxis*, see J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 93–109.

[5] Armstrong, "Preface", in *Ennead I*, vii–viii.

"rapt inspiration",[6] in a manner that Rist depicts as a "'stream of consciousness' style".[7]

At its most universal biotic level, this apportionment of his life, between inadvertent preparation and production, demonstrates Plotinus' *method* of philosophizing, for propaedeutic to "method" is an entire way of life. This is more than a mere mode of thinking. Following Plato and antiquity,[8] Plotinus understood philosophy itself as a way of life and dialectic as the valuable part of philosophy – the part that can know truth directly and recognize falsehoods as contrary to the rule of truth.[9] The philosopher goes the "upward way" by nature, he is thus a seeker of truth and like the perfect soul in Plato's *Phaedrus* myth (246C1), he is "winged". He has begun to move to the higher world and is only at a loss for someone to show him the way (I.3(20).1–3, 5). Hadot highlights this crucial link in Plotinus' thought between life itself and philosophy. He points out that for Plotinus, the great problem is to learn to live our day-to-day life – a life of so great a detachment from the immanent sphere that it becomes a state of continuous contemplation. The clear light from such contemplation is then to be used to illuminate this day-to-day life.[10] Thus Plotinus' method of philosophizing – taken as a mode of attaining truth by the conduct of one's life – would have been revealed externally, by the simplification induced by his very way of life and internally, by its attendant contemplation.

What does Plotinus' life demonstrate? Notwithstanding the paucity of biographical information, it shows that the philosopher – beginning as the disciple of a master – must first *live* the ideal life and teach, before incarnating his thinking in writing. Such a life is then a progressive unfolding of layers of truth and truthfulness. For Plotinus this unfolding hardly ceases with the writing of the *Enneads*. If anything, it gathers momentum and reveals further his method – for monumental as this work is, it can never be the *summum bonum* of his philosophical unfolding. Even if his mystical insights are the *raison d'être* of the rest of his philosophy, as some scholars have claimed,[11] the *Enneads* remain effable. They can never represent Plotinus' inmost experiences, for seldom are the highest spiritual insights profaned by the written word. At best, the mysticism

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[6] Porphyry, Chapter 14.

[7] J.M. Rist, *Plotinus. The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 10.

[8] P. Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, trans. M. Chase (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 5.

[9] See H.J. Blumenthal, "Plotinus and Proclus on the Criterion of Truth", in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 260–261 for the two meanings of *kanôn* in I.3(20): (1) the standard against which something is judged and (2) the instrument by means of which something is judged.

[10] Hadot, 65–6.

[11] See Armstrong's "Preface" in *Ennead I*, xxv; G.J.P O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self* (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), 82.

articulated in this work is a catalytic adumbration of the mysticism he experienced. Propelled by the impetus and logic of his method, Plotinus' words in the *Enneads* could have led only further – to the culmination and felicitous end of his philosophy – that portentous silence in which the Ineffable is *experienced*. Here Hadot's words are fitting: "Plotinian philosophical life thus consists in a long waiting, a patient preparation, interrupted by brief, but vivid ecstasies, during which the soul reaches its end and its goal".[12]

Despite this biotic aspect, Plotinus' philosophical method is more dialectical than historical – for what is relevant to philosophy is not so much the exterior historical life, as the dialectical inner life. Thus, the vital correspondence between his philosophy and life is hardly curtailed by Plotinus' lack of biographical preoccupation or the consequence of this – that very little is known about his life – for the manifested biographical life is no more than an omen – it is something to be detached from. For Plotinus, what directly guides and connects both life and method is – not so much the force of history – but truth, their common *telos*. This is evinced by the credence for truth that Plotinus demonstrates in his predilection for essentials – for ideas over words, philosophers over scholars, and the philosophical over the merely philological[13] – as also by the clear indication in III.7(45).10 of his preference for a philosophical over a historical inquiry.

Yet, there are several concealed references to his predecessors in the *Enneads* – indicating that like anyone else, the philosopher of Lycopolis was subject to the forces of history. Thus commentators – like Matter, Gräser and Gerson – have noted Plotinus' clear awareness of the historical conditioning of his thought. Gerson comments that Plotinus is deeply and "self-consciously" rooted in a long and complex tradition. To represent Plotinus' views without appreciation of this context could only result in grotesque distortions.[14] Yet, notwithstanding this historical backdrop, Plotinus has also been described by scholars like Zeller as ahistorical and arbitrary in his use of the Greek tradition.[15] Thus Oosthout notes that it would be misleading to view the historical interpretation of the *Enneads* as the "chief key" to comprehending Plotinian thought.[16] Insofar as Plotinus was sovereign in his interpretation of extant texts, perhaps even the historical heritage he responds to was selected dialectically, by his conscious search for truth. In fact, Plotinus must have had some key insights with no historical basis whatsoever, for truth-laden insights need not be transmitted empirically. Arising from the

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[12] P. Hadot, "Histoire de la pensée hellénistique et romaine: Réflexions sur l'expérience mystique plotinienne" in *Annuaire du Collège de France, 1990–1991: Résumé des cours et travaux* (Paris, 1992), 482.

[13] Porphyry, Chapter 14.

[14] Gerson, "Introduction", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 1.

[15] Gatti, 19.

[16] H. Oosthout, *Modes of Knowledge and the Transcendental: An Introduction to Plotinus Ennead 5.3 [49]* (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1991), 12.

transcendental, they recur in truth seeking, purified human minds – they even define our search and influence our choice of mentors and precursors. Tracking the development of a philosophical idea – merely through the historical influence of one philosopher on another – can deny the *inwardness* of an insight, fail to record the subtler influences of the times, presume that those excluded from recorded history never participated in the development of these ideas, and assume that common insights never arise ahistorically in independent human minds. An inquiry that is *merely* historical can be nihilistic if it abrogates the transcendental by denigrating it to the historical, leaving no recourse but to construct the inner self out of an assemblage of the outer. In fact, an unduly historical approach to truth can derogate the status of truth itself, by locating it in the historical, rather than the transcendental – in which case, all we have is a truth that is historically relative, anthropomorphic and a complete antinomy to Plotinus' way of thinking. For Plotinus, truth derives from the Good (IV.7(2).10), it is an integral part of Intellect, and truth, all realities, and Intellect are one nature (V.5(32).3). Historically, such inward truth is known only by the ancients.[17] Plotinus claims that true doctrines are ancient, for they are present – although not explicitly – in writings regarded as authoritative (V.1(10).8). The truth of Intellect depends on its identity with its objects (V.5(32).1). When we contemplate Intellect, we become intellective and derive truth and the knowledge it contains (VI.5(23).7). Using Plato's descriptions of dialectic (*Republic* 531C–535A and *Sophist* 253C–D), Plotinus describes our search for truth in terms of the deflection of dialectic away from the world of sense to the world of Intellect, where it feeds the soul in what Plato calls "the plain of truth" in *Phaedrus* (248B6) and ends in intellection (I.3(20).4). As Blumenthal notes, for Plotinus, the real criterion or *kanôn* of truth is truth itself.[18]

Plotinus' search for truth devolves upon the unmistakably *experiential* and inspirational tone of some of his treatises. Several commentators have noted the indelible mark of Plotinus' personal experience in the *Enneads*. Dodds states that "for Plotinus the world of Platonic Forms is already the object of a kind of mystical experience". Wallis suggests that passages from the *Enneads* – like VI.7(38).15 and V.8(31).10 – which describe vividly, the radiant luminosity of the intelligible world, testify that Plotinus had an actual experience in mind. Hadot depicts Plotinus' only explicitly autobiographical narrative in IV.8(6).1, describing his awakening to the divine noetic level, as the "philosopher's fundamental experience".[19] Sinnige deems this passage as one of the "most significant testimonies" in the *Enneads* and argues that the personal experience is foremost in the mind of Plotinus.[20] Smith concludes: "As so often in Plotinus, theory is rooted

[17] Gatti, 20.

[18] Blumenthal, 265–7.

[19] Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, 25.

[20] Th.G. Sinnige, *Six Lectures on Plotinus and Gnosticism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 17–18.

in and serves experience".[21] Bussanich takes Porphyry's depictions of Plotinus' intellectual and emotional intensity, to mean that Plotinus' metaphysical doctrines are often rooted in his own experience, which in turn shapes his manner of expression.[22] Rist points out that one of the two sources from which Plotinus expounds philosophy is his kinship with the spirit of reality, the other being the traditional writings of the great thinkers of the past.[23] Finally, Schürmann notes that Plotinus' personal intensity shines through every line of the *Enneads*.[24]

Even this grounding in noetic experience reveals Plotinus' philosophical method – for it adheres to the archetypal hierarchy in the *Enneads* between Intellect and Soul, or the precedence of noetic experience over distended speculative reason. Rooted in veracity, Plotinus' method should favor the actively actual experience and immediacy of the noetic world – as the basis of his richest insights – over mere discursive speculation. Like the scientist – but at the transcendental level – the mystic is intensely *empirical*. Noetic contemplation – which is empirically keener than discursive thinking – authenticates deeper insights in a way that the latter can only emulate. Thus, the possibility that Plotinus derived his highest insights – not from discursive thinking but noetic experience – underscores the contemplative and *poietic* nature of his philosophical method, bears a fidelity to the metaphysical hierarchy in the *Enneads*, and renders his insights more objective and true.

Insofar as such truth emanates from a supernal noetic storehouse, as it were, a mystical philosopher like Plotinus must have also derived some insights directly and experientially from this storehouse – truths that were, at best, *incidentally* articulated by like-minded precursors. A case in point is the unintended resemblance between Numenius' and Plotinus' doctrines[25] – a similitude so great

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[21] A. Smith, "Eternity and time", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 214.

[22] See R.T. Wallis, "ΝΟΥΣ as Experience", in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, R.B. Harris (ed.) (Albany: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), 123–4. In support of Dodds' view, Armstrong quotes passages from V.8(31) and VI.7(38). Also see J. Bussanich, *The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 5.

[23] Rist, 171.

[24] R. Schürmann, "The Philosophy of Plotinus. Doctor Reiner Schürmann's Course Lectures", inventory established by Pierre Adler (New York: The New School for Social Research, Department of Philosophy, 1994, photocopied), 6.

[25] Armstrong observes that although the Numenian system bears some resemblances to the Plotinian – especially in the descending hierarchy of the Supreme Good or Mind, the Second Mind, and the cosmos conceived as an ensouled divine being – there are significant differences in the way Plotinus conceives his Three Hypostases and their relation to each other. Thus Amelius and Porphyry are justified in professing the originality of Plotinus. See Porphyry, 46–7, note 1. Inge also notes that Amelius' task cannot have been difficult, for there are significant differences between Numenius and Plotinus. For example, Numenius taught that there are two World Souls – one good and the other bad – and identified the

that Plotinus was accused of plagiarism, in response to which, Amelius, his disciple, wrote a book defending his teacher and discerning between the two thinkers.[26] It is such inspired truthfulness that perhaps accounts for Porphyry's belief that his master's writing was to be attributed mainly to divine inspiration and guidance.[27] Plotinus' remarkable powers of intellectual concentration, his intensely exalted mode of speech – completely free from "the staginess and windy rant of the professional speechifier" – and his radiant face, exuding kindliness and illumined by intellect perhaps attest to Porphyry's belief.[28] Insofar as Plotinus was a *savant* – a keen seeker and servant of an inward truth[29] – perhaps the ultimate guide for his work was truth – a work that emerged, in turn, as a litany of truths.

If method is still taken in its abstraction – not so much as *technê*, as a *style* of intellection revealing the inner state of the philosopher – then Plotinus' intellectual habits also illustrate his philosophical method. Firmly grounded in truth, his method *qua* style expresses itself through veracious habits of thinking, reading and writing, although these are by no means equalized by truth. It was perhaps no more than a trace of his truth-inspired state of mind that devolved upon his written and spoken words, as echoes of the former. Thus Meijer comments that Plotinus' 'technique' in writing and speaking may have been underdeveloped compared with his inspiration and persuasiveness.[30] Nevertheless, it is clear from Porphyry's account that Plotinus was in some sense, an ideal intellectual. He was distinctly personal in his use of texts, absorbing them swiftly and in writing he stated what he really felt about an issue and not what was handed down by tradition. Plotinus' intellectual sovereignty, originality, and contemplative and *experiential* thinking, not only refute the allegations of ignorant contemporaries that he was a "big driveller",[31] but also demonstrate his method, as one of "philosophical exegesis" – an appellation already used by Charrue, who understood Plotinus' interpretation of Plato as a "metaphysical reading". Plotinus revivified Plato's thought and discovered how to apply his method and ideas. His Platonism is a "Platonism in action". This exegetical aspect of Plotinus' philosophical inquiry into Plato is

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second with matter. For differences between Plotinus and Numenius, see W.R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, vol. I (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 93–5.

[26] Amelius' book is titled, *On the Difference between the Doctrines of Plotinus and Numenius*.

[27] Armstrong suggests that this has little support from the *Enneads*, for Plotinus normally thinks that the philosopher can reach the divine level without such special assistance. See Porphyry, note 1, Chapter 23. Yet, given Plotinus' reliance on the grace of the One for the highest mystical experiences and given the inspired nature of his words in the *Enneads*, perhaps Porphyry is not entirely wrong in attributing Plotinus' writing to divine inspiration.

[28] Porphyry, Chapters 8, 13, 18, 23.

[29] Gatti, 18.

[30] Meijer, 17.

[31] Porphyry, Chapters 14, 18.

justified, for as Gatti suggests, Plotinus considered Plato to be a philosopher who posed problems or *aporias* that often did not have definitive solutions.[32] Thus it was perhaps Plotinus' self-imposed exegetical and heuristic task to fill in these blanks. His credence for truth may have given him the heuristic edge that rendered his exegesis *philosophical*, for in no way was he an inert conduit of his rich heritage. In terms of his powers of innovation, he was a philosopher *par excellence*. Yet, insofar as these powers were coextensive with his attention to tradition, Plotinus was also an exegete *par excellence*.

In III.7(45).1 and 10 Plotinus declares most clearly his own thoughts on the hermeneutics of the formal method of philosophical exegesis. On the one hand, the views of the blessed predecessors must be considered. This is the exegetical foundation of the enquiry. Yet, Plotinus inveighs against the passivity of merely re-stating the opinions of the ancients, rather than doing further research about them (III.7(45).1). The former would be historical and the latter a philosophical inquiry. Plotinus himself practices this stance of philosophical exegesis in his treatment of the texts of the Middle Platonists and Peripatetics. Porphyry tells us that he did not merely recite these texts, but used a "distinctive personal line".[33] In III.7(45).10, Plotinus indicates that he has no interest in the history of philosophy for its own sake – mulling over the views of predecessors amounts to a historical rather than philosophical inquiry. These views are to be gauged dialectically, by something still higher – the objective measuring gauge of truth. Their worth lies in their veracity. Thus Plotinus uses truth to inquire which of the blessed philosophers have attained the truth most completely and deems Plato, of course, to have achieved this goal.[34] The process of philosophical inquiry is – not invention – but discovery of truth and the ideal exegete is *philosophical* – he reveals truth further, by taking a truthful philosopher further along. Thus, Plotinus' method is exegetical – for the authoritative views are to be taken into account – but also philosophical – for these views must be further researched into. Perhaps his method connotes mastery, for as Schürmann suggests, Plotinus was more a "master", than a philosopher in the modern sense.[35] It certainly promises what Strange requires for the proper understanding of a philosopher – the ability to go beyond the catechisms of his positions.[36] Plotinus meets this requirement, for despite his qualified claim to

[32] Gatti, 20–21.

[33] Porphyry, Chapter 14.

[34] Armstrong suggests that Plotinus deems Plato as having attained the truth most completely, but Rist observes that Plotinus does not think Plato possesses the whole truth. See *Plotinus Ennead III*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 296–7, note 1 and Rist, 185.

[35] Schürmann, 5.

[36] S.K. Strange, "Plotinus on the Nature of Eternity and Time", in *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*, L.P. Schrenk (ed.) (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 23.

being no more than an exegete of Plato, he goes beyond the catechisms of Plato's positions and takes Plato's insights to new heights.[37]

Yet Plotinus' philosophical method – so conducive to his intensity as an experiential thinker and writer – is possibly also the cause of some of his stylistic problems noted by commentators. In his attempts to represent the ineffable, transcendental, supra-rational world (the noetic realm and the One) by its very opposite and minor progeny – the mundane medium of discursive speech – Plotinus' writing can be elusive, unsystematic and even abstruse. Yet, why does discursive speech, as signifier, fall short of its exalted object of representation? At this level, representation and truth should no longer be at variance. The veracity of representation should be strengthened by the commanding object it serves, for as Schroeder notes, insofar as language is ever mantic, it is transparent to reveal the One in and through the discursive operations of the mind.[38] The awe-inspiring silence of the signified should imbue the signifier with greater veracity than lies within its own power to transmit. Yet, this is usually not the case and the inadequacy of speech to represent the Ineffable Divine will perhaps always remain a mystery. The great mystics of this world have often held the medium of speech to be impeding, inherently distorting, and inadequate before its task. Plotinus – whose attempts have been assessed as valiant, yet perplexing – is no exception. Drawing from his keen transcendental empiricism, Plotinus represents the metaphysical through discursive speech, its immanent subsequent – and this too is part of his philosophical method. In *The Allegory of the Cave* (VII. 518), Plato uses this order of representation – in the mimetic visible world, shadows and reflections represent their originals, inasmuch as the sun represents the Good. In sonic terms, both Plato and Plotinus represent sounds by their echoes and not echoes by sounds. In fact, this mantic order of representation recurs beyond Plato. As Proimos notes, all reality in Plato and Neoplatonism tries to represent the reality of the ideal forms – always unsuccessfully, yet necessarily.[39]

Gerson notes that the treatises of the *Enneads* make many demands on the reader and have discouraging features. Their style varies from the literary, to the dialectical, to the analytical and the reader can have the impression of passing from

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[37] Plotinus' words in V.1(10)8 are often construed as his claim to being no more than an exegete of Plato. However, as Strange points out, all that Plotinus is claiming in this chapter is that the doctrine of the three hypostases is implicit in Plato. Strange also observes that from Plotinus' gibe at Longinus in Porphyry, Chapter 14, it should be clear that Plotinus did not see himself as merely an exponent of Plato. See Strange, 29–30. Similarly, Rist refutes the claim that Plotinus saw himself as merely an exegete of Plato, despite what he says in V.1(10).8 and III.7(45).1. See Rist, 185.

[38] See F.M. Schroeder, "Plotinus and Language", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 352.

[39] C. Proimos, "Martin Heidegger on *Mimesis* in Plato and Platonism", in *Neoplatonism and Western Aesthetics*, A. Alexandrakis and N.J. Moutafakis (eds) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 154.

the "clear light" of expository prose to the "dense fog" of allegory and abstraction and then out again. Part of the problem may lie in the fact that owing to his poor eyesight Plotinus never revised anything he wrote and was conservative in his use of philosophical terminology. He preferred to use a familiar word in unfamiliar ways, rather than coin a new one, thus rendering the translator's task formidable. Gerson notes that there aren't ten sentences in a row anywhere in the *Enneads*, where there is not at least one disputable philological issue – and this is a fact that the reader has to face.[40] Yet Plotinus' attempt to represent the ineffable is not incoherent. Armstrong comments that Plotinus' Greek is highly unconventional and irregular – but not bad or "barbarous".[41] Schwyzer remarks, that Plotinus' writing is not the "stammering utterance of a mystic" – but is rather, the "intelligent struggle to express the inexpressible, in which all the stylistic resources of the Greek language are employed". Thus, serious difficulty in understanding the *Enneads* derives – not from any obscurity of expression – but from the abstractness of Plotinus' thought. To this, Bussanich responds that it is not always abstractness of thought that creates difficulties in reading the *Enneads*, but also the intensity of Plotinus' experience – both of the intelligible world and of mystical union with the One. Plotinus does not eschew rigorous philosophical thought – on the contrary, especially in his discussions of the One and Intellect, he has a metaphysics experience, wrought by philosophical resources of diverse traditions. Yet, as Bussanich cautions, the reader of the *Enneads* should be vigilant, aware of the context of the discussion, always willing to read between the lines, look out for the views of "anonymous interlocutors", and encounter difficulties caused by Plotinus' "parenthetical remarks" and use of "elliptical expressions", or "rebuttals" of the views of other philosophers. Wallis notes that Plotinus wrote the *Enneads* in "philosophical shorthand". He warns that it is not always easy to see how much of an interlocutor's position Plotinus means to reject and exactly where his own reply starts.[42]

It is perhaps noteworthy that the very factors, which contributed these stylistic challenges, may have yet been remunerative. Plotinus' writings were not exoteric – he did not write with the intention of publishing. Also, the *Enneads* are a living *corpus* that grew out of an *oral* tradition of discussions in Plotinus' school. These two factors – which may have led to the problems noted by commentators – perhaps are the very causes which authenticate Plotinus' writing and cause it to be *alive*. Thus Schürmann extols Plotinus' writings as extraordinary precisely because of their dialogical character,[43] and Armstrong, because Plotinus' writing and teaching are free of the "dry, tidy, systematic, authoritarian presentation of the

[40] Gerson, "Introduction", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 2, 4, 8.
[41] Armstrong "Preface" in *Ennead I*, xxix.
[42] Bussanich, 3–5.
[43] Schürmann, 5.

scholastic text-book".[44] If anything, it is extraordinary that *despite* their dialogical character, Plotinus words display so subtle, mantic and rarefied a level of reasoning that they coax the reader to ascend from the coarseness of instrumental reason to the refinement and cogency of Plotinian reason.

Perhaps a subtler tidiness reveals itself in Plotinus' formal intellectual method of philosophizing about which he expresses awareness in *Ennead* III.7(45)1.[45] In keeping with the inherently veracious and hence dialectical nature of his overall mode, Plotinus' formal method too is, as Strange suggests, *dialectical* – one which in fact resembles that of Aristotle. This method – which Aristotle probably learnt in Plato's Academy – comprises the following steps. The investigation begins by surveying, at the lower end, the commonly accepted opinions on the subject at hand and at the upper, the more veracious views of previous philosophers, or the wise. These latter reputable views are then compared and contrasted to detect agreements and disagreements that are used – along with the philosopher's own dialectical skill – to develop philosophical puzzles concerning the subject at hand. In the final stage, these puzzles are resolved by showing that as many of the authoritative views as possible can be reconciled with one another. As Strange notes, what is crucial is that this last step is taken as sufficient to close the question. Strange also points out that the reputable statements of ancient philosophers, in III.7(45).1, correspond to the authoritative views of the wise for Aristotle. The less veracious, commonly accepted opinions – an example of which is the interior conception of time that Plotinus refers to in III.7(45).7 – correspond to Aristotle's opinions of the many. These are beliefs shared by nearly all human beings – which Aristotle and the Stoics held to be not entirely false and possibly a reliable guide for inquiry, but Strange deems to be unclear and devoid of philosophical insight. As Strange notes, despite the resemblance in their methods, Plotinus differs from Aristotle in two ways – in the weight he gives to the views of the ancients over the views of the many, which is a sign of Plotinus' scholasticism, and in his faith in common conceptions, whose truth he takes as guaranteed because they are natural conceptions and objects of recollection. Thus unlike Aristotle, Plotinus does not seek to investigate them dialectically.[46]

Was Plotinus an original thinker? This question has often been answered affirmatively, by citing Plotinus' ingenuity in his interpretation of his sources. Yet Plotinus himself disclaims novelty with respect to some of his views. He asserts that true doctrines are already present, even if not explicitly, in the authoritative

[44] Armstrong "Preface" in *Ennead I*, viii.

[45] Oosthout suggests that Plotinus has a transcendental method, which consists of reconciling apparently contradictory ideas – such as the notions that no mode of thought is truly capable of self-knowledge, yet all thought is a kind of self-knowledge. This yields the tool with which to analyze the basic laws that govern the relation between thought and reality. See Oosthout, 26–31.

[46] Strange, 23–31.

works of the ancients like Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle. For the source of the three levels of reality he cites the writings of Plato himself (V.1(10).8–9). This is hardly surprising, for Plotinus held Plato to have "attained the truth most completely".[47] Notwithstanding the fact that Plotinus' thought is embedded in an extensive historical *milieu*, no assessment of Plotinus' originality can be undertaken without referring to the metaphysical fount of the dialectic he employs. The significance of veracity in Plotinus' approach and the supernal noetic locus of truth in his system of thought persuade us to define originality in terms of proximity to truth. Plotinus' purported originality can be examined only in the light of his dialectical-historical method of philosophical exegesis. If originality is understood as revelation of and contact with a supernal truth, then from Plotinus' portrait of Plato, it would appear that Plato alone is original and his exegetes can do no more than shed further light on the truth he has already revealed. Thus Plotinus suggests in V.1(10).8 that exegetes like himself merely interpret these pre-existing views. In fact, as Hadot points out, in late antiquity, originality is a defect, fidelity to tradition, a duty, and philosophy, an exegesis. It is only in the course of philosophy's attempts at exegetical reconciliation and systematization of texts that originality comes into play.[48] Dodds too points out that originality was not in demand in the third century.[49]

Yet commentators have acclaimed Plotinus for his originality. Plotinus' *contemplative* and experiential method of philosophy have caused him to be commemorated by later Neoplatonists – more as a venerated predecessor than direct ancestor – one who inadvertently incited further debates even among successors who disagreed with his views. He has also drawn encomiums from recent commentators like Faggin, who have insisted that even if Plotinus does not claim originality, testifying instead the value of the Platonic tradition, he is to be lauded for his "undeniable creativity centered on the remarkable doctrinal novelty in his processions of the hypostases".[50] Commentators have located Plotinus' originality in his ability to enliven existing texts through his own profound philosophical elucidation. Longinus notes that Plotinus had a particularly original way of thinking and Porphyry detects this originality in the fact that Plotinus enriched his reading of the commentaries of the Middle Platonists and the Peripatetics with the distinctively personal nature of his interpretation and the mind of Ammonius.[51] Hadot draws our attention to the "unique, incomparable, and irreplaceable tonality" of Plotinus' written word, in his infinite quest after the absolutely simple.[52] Rist notes that following the method of Ammonius, Plotinus

[47] See note 34.
[48] See Hadot, 17–18.
[49] E. R. Dodds, *Journal of Roman Studies* 50 (1960): 1.
[50] Gatti, 19.
[51] Porphyry, Chapters 14, 20.
[52] Hadot, 19–20.

employed his natural philosophical bent to handle the works of the Stoics and Peripatetics – not as a commentator – but as an original thinker, thus implying that originality was part of the very method of philosophizing that he inherited from Ammonius.[53] Schürmann comments that the quest for simplicity and the way it is carried out is absolutely genuine to Plotinus. The hortatory imperatives in his thought indicate that something completely different is at stake than in Socrates or the Stoics.[54] Oosthout suggests that Plotinus uses his predecessors – like the "divine Plato" – less as an interpreter and commentator, than as an independent and original thinker. He notes that instead of merely reciting the authoritative texts, Plotinus on the one hand acknowledges that they anticipate the essence of his views (V.1(10).8) and on the other, reshapes these extant texts towards his own profound expounding of the philosophical idea in question.[55] Similarly, Gerson comments that – while Plotinus was not original in calling the first principle "the One", in making the forms internal to intellect, or in distinguishing an empirical from an ideal self – he rethinks the grounds for the claims he inherits instead of citing Plato inertly, his analytical task consists of displaying the weaknesses of opposing views and constructing his unassailable arguments for the existence of the One, and his writing "glows" with a bold and imaginative use of reason.

Despite such clear evidence of his innovations and the accolades he drew from legatees, it is perhaps impossible to assess Plotinus' originality. Bearing in mind his credence for truth, this difficulty arises – not merely because he is part of a rich heritage, or because so little is known about his life – but because of the nature of truth itself. If historically disparate thinkers are mediated metaphysically by a supernal storehouse of truth, then all scholarly questions about the degree of originality of a thinker come to rest. No thinker is ultimately original and what appears as originality is simply proximity to truth, indicative of a contemplative hue that points to a hermeneutic cycle. It is through his spiritual dialogue with the text that a philosopher grows ontologically. He then infuses his heuristic vision and interpretation of the text with the fruits of this ascent. Deepened by the text, the reader-thinker, in turn illumines the text. His encounter with the text prompts his dormant fore-knowledge of truth – the source of his originality and fecundity – using which he then sheds the light of truth on the entire cognitive *milieu* of the text, thus revealing its metaphysical – and not merely historical – universe. This too was perhaps part of Plotinus' philosophical method. Gurtler draws Plotinus' method from his exegesis of the Platonic Demiurge – a method that implies in part a "hermeneutic for understanding philosophical texts, especially those of Plato". In the absence of "historic or developmental categories of modern exegesis", Plotinus

[53] Rist, 171.
[54] Schürmann, 5.
[55] Oosthout, 13.

is "forced to find ways around the literal meaning of a text that still come from the text itself".[56]

Conclusion

Guided by his search for truth, Plotinus appears to have deployed a *contemplative* and experiential method of philosophy – one that informs his heuristic vision, confers on him ingenuity in his exegeses of Plato and other "blessed philosophers", and reflects his entire way of life. What remains remarkable about Plotinus then is not so much his contribution to the philosophical tradition of the west, as the fact that amidst the pandemonium of his times, he was able to draw an inner peace from his rarefied propinquity to the noetic realm of truth and commune the flavor of the higher hypostases to us, through the prosaic medium of the written word. Like Plotinus himself, perhaps we should, as Gerson suggests, focus on finding truth and let originality take care of itself![57]

[56] G.M. Gurtler, "Providence: The Platonic Demiurge and Hellenistic Causality", in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, M.F. Wagner (ed.) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 109.

[57] Gerson, "Introduction", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 7–8.

Chapter 3

Heritage and Legacy

In his exercise of philosophical exegesis, Plotinus is undoubtedly embedded in a tapestry of historical flow, even though the thrust of his method appears more dialectical than historical. His philosophical heritage serves Plotinus as a twofold map, perhaps both determined by his dialectical search for truth. One yields points of reference and the other, sources of influence. Even though his thoughts were not necessarily echoed by later Neoplatonists, Plotinus in his turn treads history, quite inadvertently, by leaving behind a long trail of legatees. He exerts his direct or indirect influence – not only on the early Neoplatonists – but also on other myriad versions – Islamic, Jewish, Medieval Christian, Renaissance, Cambridge and recent forms of Neoplatonism.[1] It is in the light of his dialectical-historical method of philosophical exegesis that Plotinus' heritage and legacy are examined in this chapter.

Heritage

The blessed predecessors to whom Plotinus pays homage in the *Enneads*, are not limited to Plato, Parmenides and Aristotle – the three whom Plotinus takes to be authorities on the question of eternity and time in III.7(45). Although the philosophers cited by name in the *Enneads* are only a few from the Hellenic period – Pherecydes, Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus – Cilento has described Plotinus' work as the *summa* of ancient thought,[2] and the synthesis of eight centuries of Greek philosophy has been attributed to Plotinus by Gatti. In fact, as Gatti notes, Plotinus' sources are many more if we include the citations and allusions in the *Enneads*, which outnumber the direct references. Some significant predecessors include Parmenides, for the identity of being with thinking, which influenced Plotinus' second hypostasis and Pythagoreanism for its notion of principles and numbers. Philo Judaeus and the Middle Platonists, who flourished in the Alexandrian *milieu* between the first and the third centuries A.D. also left their

[1] R.B. Harris, "A Brief Description of Neoplatonism", in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, R.B. Harris (ed.) (Albany: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), 13–19.

[2] V. Cilento, *Saggi su Plotino* (Milan: U. Mursia & Co., 1973), 255.

imprint on Plotinus' thought. The impact of Philo can be detected in Plotinus' notions of the intelligible world, theology and mystical asceticism. Plotinus' tenet, that time and eternity are two kinds of *lives*, appears already in Philo, for whom, eternity is the life of the intelligible world and time, the life of the perceptible world.[3] The Neopythagoreans or Platonists under Neopythagorean influence anticipated some Plotinian notions, including that of the three hypostases. The Neopythagorean identification of *tolma* with the Indefinite *Dyad* and the results of this association – the metaphysical and moral character of *tolma* and the dynamic connotation of the *Dyad*, as a motion towards otherness and non-being – influenced Plotinus' use of *tolma* and his appellation of Intellect as the *Dyad* (V.1(10).5), understood as the beginning of plurality, and hence deficiency.[4] From Porphyry's accounts we know that in his school, Plotinus used to have texts read of several thinkers, mainly from the second century A.D.[5] – Middle Platonists (like Severus, Gaius and Atticus), a Neopythagorean Middle Platonist like Cronius, and Numenius of Apamea, who combined Middle Platonism with Neopythagoreanism. Plotinus also read out the commentaries of the Peripatetics from the second century A.D., like Adrastus of Aphrodisias, Aspasius and Alexander of Aphrodisias.[6]

Three immediate, yet polar influences on Plotinus must have been those of his master, Ammonius Saccas, his times and his students. Although in accordance with a prior agreement, Plotinus remained silent about the doctrines of Ammonius, he based his class lectures on his studies with the latter. Porphyry indicates that Plotinus did not just speak straight out of the commentaries of the Middle Platonists and the Peripatetics, but "took a distinctively personal line in his consideration, and brought the mind of Ammonius to bear on the investigations in hand". It would seem that his "distinctly personal line" was the direct result of the *mind* or insight of his venerated master,[7] which, as Dillon tentatively suggests and Baltes argues, is a reference to the technique of the latter.[8] Yet, this infusion of the

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[3] M.L. Gatti, "Plotinus: The Platonic tradition and the foundation of Neoplatonism", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10–12; R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 138.

[4] N.J. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Being* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 14, 18.

[5] See J.M. Rist, *Plotinus. The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 171. As Rist notes, this list does not include Plato and Aristotle and in the *Enneads*, Plotinus does not mention by name any of these Middle Platonist or Peripatetic authorities. Rist concludes that knowledge of the basic Platonic and Aristotelian texts was assumed for students at this stage.

[6] Porphyry, "On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books", in *Plotinus: Porphyry on Plotinus Ennead I*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), Chapter 14; Gatti, 13.

[7] Porphyry, Chapters 3, 14.

[8] Helleman-Elgersma notes that it is difficult to find a theme or motif in the *Enneads*

spirit of Ammonius is perhaps too inward to fit within the rigid instrumental bounds of a technique and Meijer is perhaps right, when he disagrees and suggests that this "mind of Ammonius" may have had to do with Ammonius' and Plotinus' profundity and their personal ways of dealing with subjects – in contradistinction with normal scholars like Longinus, who tended to examine a text as it stood and to make it fit in with the theories of the author.[9] This echoes the point made earlier by Rist – that the method of Ammonius called for the philosopher to apply his "natural talent" to the texts at hand and handle his predecessors in a philosophical rather than scholarly manner.[10]

Yet, the communion between this extraordinary disciple and his venerated master may be too deep to qualify as a mere "personal way" or "natural talent". Perhaps it manifests the *essential* character of the education Plotinus received from Ammonius. Perhaps this hovering presence of Ammonius in Plotinus' exegesis indicates something far more direct, essential and subtile than anything mediated by the intellectual process, or documented historically. Perhaps it means that Ammonius was no more than a conduit of an impersonal universal spirit, far larger than himself and that he infused this spirit *directly* into Plotinus during his years of discipleship, in keeping with the oral and arcane character of this spiritual and formative education. Perhaps it was this essential spiritual force that Plotinus transmitted to his investigations, when he suffused them with the mind of Ammonius. That this may indeed be the case is indicated by the *recondite* nature of the education he received from Ammonius. After all, Plotinus made an agreement with fellow students – Erennius and Origen[11] – to never disclose the doctrines revealed to them by Ammonius. Bussanich suggests that the "distinctly personal line" that Plotinus adopted can take the form of inconsistent use of terminology and appropriation of terms for his own purposes, with respect to sources like the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics.[12] These may sound like instances of subjectivity. Yet the individuality evident in Plotinus' "distinctly personal line" need not belie truth and objectivity. If the "mind" of Ammonius that Plotinus brought to bear upon his exegetical investigations was indeed this *direct* spiritual essence, then the power of this force would have directly bequeathed this

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that can with certainty be attributed to Ammonius and cites Armstrong's suggestion that it was perhaps Ammonius' method of philosophizing that attracted Plotinus – a method that encouraged discussion and the interchange of ideas, instead of the giving of prepared lectures. See W. Helleman-Elgersma, *Soul-Sisters: A Commentary on Enneads IV 3 (27), 1-8 of Plotinus* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980), 18.

[9] P.A. Meijer, *Plotinus on the Good or the One (Enneads VI,9): An Analytical Commentary* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1992), 16–17.

[10] Rist, 171, 173.

[11] As Armstrong and other commentators suggest, this Origen is not Origen, the Christian. See Porphyry, Chapter 3, note 1.

[12] J. Bussanich, *The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 4–5.

"distinctive personal line" as something dialectically pristine. In keeping with the august nature of its source, this "line" would have been authentic, veracious and anything but subjective.

As Sinnige notes, the problems that Plotinus discusses in the *Enneads*, have a large part in common with the problems of the age.[13] This echoes the point made earlier by Bréhier, that Plotinus' philosophy is deeply influenced by the prevailing *Zeitgeist*. His participation in the collective practice of contemplation, which existed in his time, explains some notable traits of his philosophy most successfully.[14] Plotinus worked in an intellectual *milieu* that included the Gnostics, Hermetists, and several professional philosophers of diverse schools and points of view.[15] Oosthout notes that philosophical discussions of Plotinus' own time left their mark on *Ennead* V.3(49). Thus the first chapter of this tractate echoes ideas of the skeptical philosopher, Sextus Empiricus. Moreover, as many scholars have noted, aspects of Plotinus' description of the nature of Intellect, are related to the ideas expressed by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his commentaries on Aristotle.[16] It is perhaps no longer heretical to cite influences from the Orient as part of Plotinus' *Zeitgeist*. Bréhier's early attempt to establish a relationship between Plotinus and India has been resurrected in recent times, by commentators like Sinnige, who notes striking similarities between the *Upanishads* and Plotinus' doctrine of inward meditation, leading to union with the universal Self.[17] Sinnige argues that India was not a *terra incognita* to the Alexandrians. Quite a few Greek texts record the fact that it was not only traders, but also Indian philosophers who made their way to Alexandria.[18] Finally, the subjects, on which Plotinus wrote, were derived from

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[13] Th.G. Sinnige, *Six Lectures on Plotinus and Gnosticism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 101.

[14] É. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. J. Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 3, 15.

[15] Armstrong, xi.

[16] H. Oosthout, *Modes of Knowledge and the Transcendental: An Introduction to Plotinus Ennead 5.3 [49]* (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1991), 9.

[17] See Bréhier, 106–31. Earlier than Bréhier, H.F. Müller, in "Orientalisches bei Plotin?" *Hermes* 49 (1914): 70–89, pointed out that Plotinus is thoroughly "Hellenic", as indicated by his devotion to Plato and to the method of dialectic. Armstrong responded to Bréhier in "Plotinus and India", *Classical Quarterly* XXX (1936): 22–8, locating Plotinus' roots within Greek philosophy. Others like Schwyzer ruled out the possibility of any derivation of the identity of the self and the One in Plotinus from Indian thought and Cilento suggested that Plotinus' mysticism was not "contaminated" by oriental influences. He characterized it as something genuinely Hellenic. See H.R. Schwyzer, "Plotin", *RE* XXI (1951), cols. 580–581 and V. Cilento, *Antologia plotiniana* (Bari, 1970), 17. For more information on Plotinus and India, see A. M. Wolters, "A Survey of Modern Scholarly Opinion on Plotinus and Indian Thought", in *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*, R.B. Harris (ed.) (Albany: SUNY Press, 1982).

[18] Sinnige, 58–9, 104.

problems that arose in the discussions at meetings in his school.[19] He wrote in response to questions from students and never set out to write a systematic exposition of his philosophy. Thus, as Armstrong points out, Plotinus' writings grew *naturally* out of his teachings,[20] and as Gerson notes, some of Plotinus' pieces are intensely dialectical – they take into account the strengths and weaknesses of opposing arguments, before coming to a resolution – precisely because they are written in response to questions raised in "class" by Plotinus' students.[21]

Through a critical encounter with his heritage, Plotinus, on the one hand, acts as more than the exegete of Plato, he claims to be.[22] His rendering of Plato's thought is more than doxological. On the other, he rebuts those philosophical traditions that nevertheless bear an influence on his thought in the *Enneads*. Indeed Plato remains – *par excellence* – the main inspiration for Plotinus in the mystical, theological and metaphysical facets of his thought.[23] Plotinus derives the subordinationist trinity of his three principles, or hypostases – the One, Intellect and Soul – from Platonists of his time, who in turn, draw upon a loose interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus* and the sixth book of the *Republic*.[24] Citing Henry, Rist notes that the three "main planks" of Plotinus' philosophy, deriving from what he thought Plato said are – the distinction between the sensibles and intelligibles, the immateriality and immortality of the soul, and the transcendence of the One.[25] Thus Augustine's remark, that one would have supposed that in Plotinus Plato lived again and Ficino's that through Plotinus, Plato himself spoke – are hardly surprising.[26] Yet, as Gatti notes, commentators are divided in their views on Plotinus' indebtedness to Plato. For some – like Zeller, Theiler, Schwyzer, Armstrong and Krämer – this debt is absolute, Plotinus is no more than a disciple of Plato, and Plato is beyond all criticism.[27] For Strange, Plotinus never aims his dialectical inquiry at the views of Plato, which he cites almost "scripturally" – for his goal is to seek to *understand* Plato's doctrines, which are *ex hypothesi* held to be true. Strange suggests that Plotinus may be seen as regarding Plato as a wise man (*sophos*), who had, to some degree understood the nature of the Good and thus had a claim to truth, regardless of how hard it may be to interpret some of his

[19] Porphyry, Chapters 4–5.
[20] Armstrong, *Ennead I*, vii–viii.
[21] Gerson, 3.
[22] See note 37 in Chapter 2.
[23] Gatti, 10–11.
[24] Bréhier, 6.
[25] Rist, 182–3.
[26] Gatti, 21–2; Rist, 181.
[27] Gatti 18.

statements.[28] For Beierwaltes, despite its uniqueness, Plotinus' philosophy remains within the "continuity of the Platonic tradition".[29]

But for others, like Rist and Eon, Plotinus is completely independent of the tradition. This includes Plato for he uses Platonic doctrines in an independent manner.[30] Rist suggests that although Plotinus perhaps did not go through the whole Platonic *corpus* thoroughly, his attitude to the Platonic text is "anthological". Yet, Plotinus adds doctrines, which Plato never held, changes what Plato says, and even changes Plato's doctrines. Thus Rist concludes that Plotinus' respect for Plato does not prevent him from saying some un-Platonic things, where necessary. For Rist, Plotinus is a Platonist only to the extent that Plato has set him on the path that will lead him to truth. Plotinus' major motive for philosophizing is to rationalize his own intuitions and experiences and Plotinus is a Platonist to the extent that Plato facilitates this with the greatest success. Thus on Plotinus' horizon, truth is perhaps superior to Plato himself and as Rist puts it, what Plato says of Homer and Aristotle of Plato, so too Plotinus says implicitly of Plato: "I honor him but I honor truth more".[31]

For Dodds, Plotinus tends to cite Plato only instrumentally, as an authority for his own conclusions.[32] Plotinus' thought – while formally, no more than an interpretation of Plato – is substantially modern. It is an attempt to solve the spiritual problems of the day.[33] For Gurtler, that Plotinus takes Plato for his model does not mean he "abdicates" his own rational powers. Nor does it mean any uncritical repudiation of other philosophers like Aristotle and the Stoics.[34] For Gerson, Plotinus' Platonism is not a simple meditation on his master's work. Between Plato and Plotinus there was the philosophical activity of Aristotle, the Stoics, Epicureans, Skeptics, and the Middle Platonists – much of which was critical of Plato. Plotinus' understanding and expression of the wisdom of Plato was filtered through his responses to the challenges of Plato's critics – responses that are Platonic in spirit. Plotinus' Platonism then amounts to his reformulations of Plato's claims, mainly to rebut Aristotelian and Stoic objections to Platonism, which presume specific interpretations of these claims. What Plotinus shares with Plato are: (1) the principle that eternal verities and their reality are paradigms for the world of sense, such that the latter represents, imitates or shares in the former; (2) the principle that eternal multiplicity cannot be ultimate – there must be an

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[28] S.K. Strange, "Plotinus on the Nature of Eternity and Time", in *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*, L.P. Schrenk (ed.) (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 30.

[29] Gatti, 27.

[30] *Ibid*., 18.

[31] Rist, 182–5, 187.

[32] Gatti, 18.

[33] E.R. Dodds, *Journal of Roman Studies* 50 (1960): 1.

[34] G.M. Gurtler, "Providence: The Platonic Demiurge and Hellenistic Causality", in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, M.F. Wagner (ed.) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 119.

absolutely simple first principle that stands in a causal relationship to the "complex that accounts for eternal truth"; (3) that persons are not bodies – they have destinies that surpass the bodily state. Yet Plotinus is not entirely uncritical of Plato – he admits that Plato's thoughts on the self's incarnate and discarnate status are far from obvious.[35]

As commentators have noted, the traditions against which Plotinus is peremptory in his polemic, nevertheless linger with a surreptitious presence in the *Enneads*. Thus, as Porphyry points out, Plotinus' writings are full of concealed Stoic and Peripatetic doctrines – in particular Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[36] Plotinus even adopts some of Aristotle's attitudes. Rist notes that Plotinus bears towards Aristotle the same attitudes as Aristotle himself bore towards his predecessors – in particular, the Presocratic natural philosophers.[37] Although Plotinus does not have the same esteem for Aristotle, as he does for Plato and the Pythagoreans, is critical of Aristotle's conception of the first principle, and replaces Aristotle's categories with those of his own,[38] Aristotle's doctrines are crucial – not only for Plotinus' conception of the second hypostasis or principle, which is identified with the "Aristotelian *nous*" – but also that of the soul, categories and many aspects of physics.[39] Thus as Inge suggests, Plotinus perhaps knew and understood Aristotle better than he knew Plato.[40] Yet, as Rist observes, Plotinus uses Aristotle's theory only where he sees fit to use it – and not necessarily where Aristotle supposed it should be used. Thus although Plotinus applies the Aristotelian self-thinking mind to his second hypostasis, he attacks Aristotle when it comes to using such a dualistic God as the first principle of a monistic universe – a view that had become common by the second century A.D.[41]

As Gatti notes, Plotinus was even more critical of Stoic materialism, than of Aristotle, although as Rist points out, no Stoic philosopher is mentioned by name in the *Enneads*.[42] Rist notes that the Stoicism that Plotinus criticizes is perhaps more a state of mind than the theories of any specific philosopher. According to Theiler, Plotinus opposed the Stoic materialist view of the soul and of God, their theory of categories, their concept of time, and their doctrine of the interpenetration of bodies. Yet, as Rist notes, there are Stoic-sounding ideas in the *Enneads*: the sympathy of the universe and its interconnection and the *logos* and *spermatikoi logoi* in the material world.[43] However Plotinus alters them radically

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[35] Gerson, 3–4, 6–7.

[36] Porphyry, Chapter 14.

[37] Rist, 179.

[38] Harris, *Significance of Neoplatonism*, 3–4.

[39] Gatti, 11.

[40] W.R. Inge, "Neoplatonism", *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, IX (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 309.

[41] Rist, 179.

[42] Gatti, 11; Rist, 173.

[43] See Bréhier, 168–9 for a further comparison of Plotinus with the Stoics.

from their original Stoic form.[44] Thus the *logoi* for Plotinus depend on the Platonic Ideal World, having nothing but their name in common with their Stoic counterparts. Also, the Plotinian *logos* is the power of transcendent principles working in the visible world and not a pantheistic God as the Stoics would have it. Rist concludes that although there are Stoic doctrines embedded in the *Enneads*, Plotinus is their master.[45]

Scholars are divided on the extent and significance of Gnostic influence on Plotinus, notwithstanding his explicit anti-Gnosticism. As Armstrong maintains, Plotinus was an "effective anti-Gnostic apologist" who was successful in turning Hellenic thought away from any approach to the Gnostic world-view and in establishing the basics of anti-Gnostic Neoplatonism, which his successors only developed and "at some points" completed. One of Plotinus' main quarrels with the Gnostics had to do with their valuation of the universe and its maker. Although Armstrong acknowledges the possibility of "unconscious Gnostic influence" on Plotinus' thought, he doubts that this was significant during his writing period. Given Plotinus' love for the world, expressed especially in the way in which he infuses the living variety of the material cosmos into the intelligible world, Armstrong does not believe that Plotinus in his later life thought like a Gnostic or even like Numenius. Heaven for Plotinus is "here and now". Thus in Gnostic terms, he has never left the Pleroma or World of Light and stands in no need of a "saving revealed" gnosis, "complete with escape-plan" to get him back there.[46] Yet, Sinnige claims that despite his polemic against the Gnostics, in II.9(33), there is an unmistakable presence of Gnosticism in the *Enneads*, although mostly corrected and adapted by Plotinus. This tradition is present – not only in the negative sense, as a mistaken mythology to be refuted and rejected – but also in the positive sense, in the form of a few fundamental theories resembling the Gnostic doctrines – notably, the soul's descent and fate in this world. Sinnige also cites the texts of two Gnostic authors – Basilides and Valentinus – which, along with the texts of church fathers like Clement and Origen, contributed to the Alexandrian worldview, where Plotinus received his philosophical training.[47]

Thus, as Dodds points out, there are sources and precedents for every passage in the *Enneads*.[48] Nonetheless, as several commentators have noted, Plotinus' work cannot be reduced to a syncretic montage of his precursors. Although many of the doctrines and themes in the *Enneads* refer to earlier thinkers, it is impossible to reconstruct the whole of Plotinian thought from these sources alone. Thus, as

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[44] R.E. Witt, "The Plotinian Logos and its Stoic Basis", *Classical Quarterly* 25 (1931): 103–11.

[45] Rist, 173–4.

[46] A.H. Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", in *Gnosis, Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978), 111, 113–15.

[47] Sinnige, 1, 101–2.

[48] Gatti 14.

Oosthout concludes, the great classical philosophers – above all, Plato – taught Plotinus how to think, but did not simply spell out what he should think. Oosthout suggests that although Plotinus used the language of his predecessors, he "appropriated" their ideas to form his own "unique" philosophical thought. Plotinus did not merely deliver commentaries on Plato, or write textbooks on thinkers, like Aristotle and Posidonius, whose ideas are echoed in the *Enneads*.[49] Likewise, Gatti notes that the essence of Plotinus' system is contained in its comprehensive meaning and cannot be reduced to a mosaic. Plotinus' true originality stands in its overarching design and not in its constituent parts. Dörrie suggests that Plotinus the "traditionalist" is inseparable from Plotinus the "innovator"– for he aligns his innovations to the traditions to which he seeks to adhere.[50] Deck, attributes to Plotinus, a fresh, personal grasp of reality and the existence of his own controlling notions, even though he borrows much of his vocabulary and elements of his conceptual apparatus from many sources. Plotinus reworked and reinterpreted his sources under the direction of these notions and so attained an internal unity in his thought.[51]

Plotinus' autonomy from his predecessors is perhaps demonstrated best in his differences with them and his innovations. As commentators have noted, there are significant differences between Philo and Plotinus.[52] Sorabji notes that Plotinus differs from Philo in having three and not two levels of reality and Rist, that the slight similarities between Philo's *logos* and that of Plotinus are accidental. Bréhier points out that the religiosity of Plotinus differs radically from that of Philo. Philo's notion of a *Logos* whose mission it is to lead man in his efforts towards the Good has no counterpart in Plotinus. Plotinus differs from Plato in his exclusion of politics from philosophy, his radical monism, and his complex structure of soul.[53] As gathered by Schwyzer, there are eight doctrinal points, which are regarded among commentators as Plotinian novelties – of which Dodds provides five. Dörrie adds a ninth point. The three general issues are: (1) that the subject of Intellect is identical with its objects; (2) that the three hypostases are – the One, Intellect and soul – as extracted from the *Parmenides* of Plato; (3) that Intellect proceeds from the One and the soul from Intellect. Dodds adds five more innovations of greater importance: (4) that the dynamics of the One's generative power constantly descends into the sensible world; (5) that causality is the

[49] Oosthout, 10–13.

[50] Gatti, 14, 17–18.

[51] J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), ix.

[52] W.R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, vol. I (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 97. Inge suggests that there is no evidence of any direct influence of Philo's writings upon Plotinus. Rist notes that the evidence that Plotinus knew Philo is at best inconclusive. Also see Sorabji, 138, Rist, 101, and Bréhier, 113.

[53] Gatti, 24.

atemporal relation between the intelligible world and the One and is not due to the act of Creation; (6) that Plotinus uses the "golden rule" that the higher levels are immune to the influence of the lower; (7) that the ascent of the soul to the Intellect and via Intellect to the One, is a turning to the inner self; (8) that the core of Plotinian philosophy is the examination of the self. Dörrie adds a ninth point – (9) that Plotinus – more than earlier philosophers – tried to establish an ontology culminating in the One. On this last point, Meijer suggests that this systematic tendency – although predominant in Plotinus – is also present in the Mesoplatonic systems – for example, in Numenius.[54] Meijer also attributes the innovation of the One to Plotinus himself and disputes commentators like Schwyzer and Dodds, on this issue. Schwyzer tries to save the doctrine of the One as Ammonian and Dodds argues that Plotinus' One may be traced back to Moderatus of Gades (first-century AD). Krämer denies that Plotinus is directly dependent on a predecessor, for his concept of the One and suggests more sources for this concept – sources which could have inspired Ammonius and via Ammonius, Plotinus – Eudorus, Moderatus, Philo, and Ammonius' contemporaries, like Clemens Alexandrinus or Origenes, the Christian. Meijer notes that Plotinus uses a variety of terms for the One, which include "the Good" – a name coined by Plato in the *Republic*. He believes this name is retained so as to connect Plotinus' One with all previous Platonism. Meijer claims that Plotinus did not inherit the concept of the "Superone" even from Ammonius Saccas. Tracing back the theory of the One as Supreme Entity, before Moderatus to Eudorus (25 BC), or even before him, Meijer notes that it was Plotinus – who had probably read Moderatus and it is unknown whether he was acquainted with Eudorus – who created and introduced the concept of the "Superone".[55]

Legacy

Like his heritage, the direct and indirect legacy of Plotinus is also nuanced – it stretches all the way to our era, to thinkers who range from proponents and exegetes, to contenders who disagree and alter Plotinus' thought. As Blumenthal observes, the honorific titles they accorded to Plotinus, did not mean that later Neoplatonists always agreed with Plotinus. They were dissatisfied with the relatively low intricacy of his analyses of the intelligible universe.[56] Thus, it has been suggested that Plotinus is merely one among the thinkers of the third century and not the founding father of later Neoplatonism – his views are not the direct

[54] For these nine points and Meijer's comment, see Meijer, 18, note 61.

[55] Meijer, 4, 6, 9, 18.

[56] H.J. Blumenthal, "Plotinus in later Platonism", in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 212.

ancestor of the latter.[57] Despite differences and some alterations they wrought on Plotinus' concepts, Amelius Gentilianus and Porphyry were perhaps more proponents of Plotinus, than Iamblichus – whose One exceeded the Plotinian One – and Proclus, who developed many more triads within triads for Plotinus' three emanations. Likewise, Damasius differs from Plotinus by making – not just the Ultimate – but all its products quite as ineffable.[58]

Later Neoplatonists reject Plotinus in at least four areas of his thought – his critique of the Aristotelian categories and his views regarding the undescended soul, time and evil.[59] Departing from Plotinus' position, they also tend towards an increasingly complicated articulation of the emanation of the sensible world from the One.[60] Even Porphyry differs radically from Plotinus in finding an important place for the Aristotelian categories – which brings him closer to his Middle Platonist predecessors than Plotinus. Although he describes Plotinus as "most divine", Simplicius also rejects Plotinus' critique of Aristotle's categories and follows Porphyry and Iamblichus on most points. Most later Neoplatonists, with the exception of Theodorus and perhaps Damascius, reject Plotinus' views – that some part of our mind remains permanently in the intelligible and that intellective thinking goes on all the time, even though we are aware of it only intermittently, because our existence in the sensory world provides distractions – and insist that the soul does descend as a whole.[61] As Armstrong observes, the later Neoplatonists are further removed from Plotinus than the Christians, in that they regard time and eternity as substantive principles and accord them a divine status, with proper places in the hierarchy of reality.[62] Turetzky notes that their proliferation of the hypostases distends the gulf between the intelligible and sensible worlds.[63] Moreover, as Blumenthal comments, the clarity that Plotinus' successors attempt to impose, by adding ontological levels, is artificial.[64] Iamblichus and after him, Proclus, reject Plotinus' concept of time as the life of soul, in contradistinction with eternity as the life of the noetic world. Instead, they multiply the hypostatic levels and sub-levels and take both time and eternity to be substantialized entities within a system of hypostases far more complex than that of Plotinus.[65] Simplicius, who rejects Plotinus' critique of the Aristotelian categories, finds Plotinus' views on time more helpful than those of his more recent precursors and tends to agree

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[57] *Ibid*., 214.

[58] Harris, *Significance of Neoplatonism* 10–11.

[59] Blumenthal, 213.

[60] P. Turetzky, *Time* (London: Routledge, 1998), 51.

[61] Blumenthal, 214–15, 217.

[62] *Plotinus Ennead III*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 294.

[63] Turetzky, 51.

[64] Blumenthal, 219.

[65] S. Sambursky and S. Pines, *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1971), 12–13.

with Plotinus' views of Aristotle's treatment of time in *Physics* IV.[66] The later Neoplatonists also treat the emanation of the sensible world out of the One in increasingly complicated ways. Iamblichus differs – not only in his rejection of Plotinus' identification of eternity and time with life and his definition of time – but also in his understanding of the appearance of time and the cosmos.[67] Unlike Plotinus, Iamblichus does not consider time and heaven to be generated together with the motion or life proceeding from soul, but from the intellectual ordering proceeding from the demiurge. Time and the cosmos come into existence simultaneously and together with this intellectual ordering. Proclus' equation of the proportion of intellect to soul, with the proportion of eternity to time and its corollary – that "time ranks before the soul, as eternity does before the intellect", contains an "implicit" criticism of Plotinus.[68] Finally, on the question of evil, Proclus departs from Plotinus in denying that there can be any self-subsistent evil, or that matter can be evil – matter for him is directly related to the One.[69]

Plotinus' direct or indirect influence also appears through later variations of Neoplatonism. Thus the Islamic Neoplatonist, al-Kindi, wrote a commentary on *Theologia Aristotelis* – an anonymous work and a paraphrase of *Enneads* IV, V and VI. Al-Farabi was especially interested in the thought of Porphyry. Avicenna – though influenced by al-Farabi's views – leaned more towards Plotinus than Porphyry and sought to understand Islam through the framework of Plotinian concepts. Jewish Neoplatonists, like Isaac ben Solomon Israeli, read the writings of al-Kindi and as Harris suggests, the Jewish Neoplatonic tradition helped considerably in the development of the *Kabbalah*. Medieval Christian Neoplatonists like St. Augustine and Boethius were directly influenced by Plotinus. St. Augustine was familiar with the *Enneads* and commentators suggest that his writings are permeated with Neoplatonic ideas, despite differences on topics such as the nature of God.[70] Plotinus' inspired words, in V.1(10).2, exhorting quietude upon the earth, the sea, and air, with "heaven itself at peace" – made a deep impression on both St. Basil, who makes extensive use of this whole passage and St. Augustine, who adapts this passage in the *Confessions* (IX 10. 25ff.).[71] As Armstrong notes, Plotinus' conception of eternity as the life which "belongs to that which exists and is in being, all together and full, completely without extension or interval" (III.7(45).3) had a deep influence on Christian patristic and medieval thinkers, exemplified by Boethius. Despite differences in their conceptions of soul, Plotinus' notion of time as the life of soul in movement

[66] Blumenthal, 219.
[67] Turetzky, 51.
[68] Sambursky and Pines, 43, 53, 109, note 3.
[69] Blumenthal, 220.
[70] Harris, *Significance of Neoplatonism*, 13–15.
[71] *Plotinus Ennead V*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 14, note 2.

(III.7(45).11) had a similar bearing on St. Augustine's philosophy of time.[72] The presence of Plotinus lingers beyond the medieval period. Marsilio Ficino, the Renaissance Neoplatonist and Florentine humanist wrote the first Latin translation of the *Enneads*. The seventeenth century Neoplatonists, known as the Cambridge Platonists – like Whichcote, Smith, Cudworth, Culverwel, More, and Sterry – tried to blend Plotinian thought with English Protestant Christianity. In recent centuries, commentators have traced the influence of Plotinian mysticism on Berkeley and Plotinus' theory of consciousness on Bergson's views on memory. Finally, as William James observes, there is an affinity between Charles Peirce and Plotinus.[73] Gatti notes that while in many periods Platonism and Plotinian Neoplatonism were considered identical, nineteenth-century scholars insisted on discerning between the two and at present there is again a tendency to narrow the gap between the two. In the last years of the twentieth century, the close connection between Plato and Neoplatonism, beginning with Plotinus, has been "put in relief", but the theoretical differences between the two systems have also been stressed.[74] Thus the light of Plotinus' influence reaches all the way to our present times – some of it directly and some through the mediation of our inner dialectic and its engagement with truth.

Conclusion

A supernal truth – to be attained dialectically, as Plotinus sought – brings with it that unmistakable clarity, which eschews all equivocation. To accept all sides of a non-dilemmatic philosophical debate, with no discernment, is falsely plebeian, indicating bewilderment rather than impartiality. We must consult our inner radars for truth, choose the more truthful philosophers, reject others, or deem seemingly contentious stances as partial facets of a greater truth. The task of the philosophical historian is to sift through the heritage and legacy of Plotinus and discern the shining silhouette of truth. This might emerge as a tableau of *some* different legacies – but not all. Or Plotinus' words may ring truer than others'. Or, if truth is not derived from the One, but *is* the One itself – this silhouette might emerge as something far greater. It might be that summit under whose ambiance bask the relative truths of alternative theological paradigms.

[72] Armstrong, *Plotinus Ennead III*, 293–4.
[73] Harris, *Significance of Neoplatonism*, 17–19.
[74] Gatti, 24.

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PART II
The Architectonic Scene

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Chapter 4

Edifice of Soul

Plotinus' intricate edifice of soul is more than the wraith encompassing the cosmos and its embodied beings. For Plotinus, soul exists not only as the third hypostasis, but also as the World Soul and the particular individual souls. This triune of soul types is structured in two tiers – with the hypostasis soul, or soul-genus at the helm and the species souls it makes – the World Soul and the particular souls – distributed at the base. Thus, as Smith notes, soul is a "most complex entity active at a number of ontological and cognitive levels from the highest form of reasoning down to the provision of the most basic requirements of life to the living being".[1] Plotinus' conceptualization of soul is influenced predominantly by Plato (especially the *Timaeus*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*); but it includes also Aristotelian and Stoic notions, even though he argues against some of these.[2]

Plotinus uses soul in myriad contexts like beauty and immortality. For the purpose of his cosmology however, the very archeology of soul needs to be understood. Deciphering the role of soul in the begetting of time and the world of sense calls for a comprehension of Plotinus' entire genus-species structure of soul, for many puzzles can be resolved in terms of this model. In the eleventh chapter of the treatise *On Eternity and Time* (III.7(45).11), Intellect (*nous*) – the second principle, or hypostasis – generates time and the sensible universe through *soul*. Yet, it is not immediately clear quite how the subtle relationship between the genus and its species devolves upon this genesis. The hypostasis soul is not the only conduit of Intellect's generative activity – the World Soul and "we" are also progenitors. Thus the entire genus-species structure of soul is implicated, as also Plotinus' construct of the plural self, "we". To understand the role of soul in Plotinus' cosmology, it is essential to first study the "amphibious" nature of soul and its protean involvement with its lower souls. In this chapter there are five sections: (1) Hypostasis Soul and World Soul, (2) Genus-Species Structure:

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[1] A. Smith, "Soul and Time in Plotinus", in *Psukhe – Seele – Anima*, J. Holzhausen (ed.) (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1998), 335.

[2] K. Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005), 38–9. Against the Stoics, Plotinus asserts that soul is not a body, but the "animating form" of a body and against the Aristotelians, that soul cannot be the "entelechy" of a body, corrupted along with the body.

Consubstantiality and Holism, (3) Levels of Individuation of Souls, (4) Differences among Souls, and (5) Levels of Discursion in Soul.

Hypostasis Soul and World Soul

In the *Enneads*, Plotinus determines soul at the very least, at three levels: (1) "Absolute Soul" (*autopsuchê*), or soul archetype, the highest level of soul, ontologically prior to all lower levels (including universal soul) – this archetype must be in Intellect before soul comes to be, in order that soul may come to be (V.9(5).14);[3] (2) soul in its unity, as genus, or hypostasis (*pasa psuchê*); and (3) species souls of myriad types: (i) the World Soul, or the Soul of the All (*hê tou pantos psuchê*), (ii) nature (*phusis*), the lower immanent aspect of the World Soul and (iii) other particular species souls (*hai psuchai*) – which include the individual human soul (V.1(10).1, IV.3(27).12), souls of non-humans, such as animals and plants (IV.7(2).14, V.2(11).2),[4] and souls of heavenly bodies, the sun (V.1(10).2), the stars (II.9(33)18) and the earth (IV.4(28).27).[5]

Commentators have varied in their ways of classifying the levels of soul in the *Enneads*. In accordance with Plotinus' "orthodox view", Emilsson distinguishes at least four kinds of soul: (1) the transcendent or hypostasis soul, which is not the soul of any particular thing and remains in the noetic realm, (2) the higher World Soul, responsible for the life of the visible cosmos, (3) nature, or vegetative soul, which is the lower level of the World Soul and immanent in the cosmos, and (4) the individual human souls, which Plotinus often refers to as "our souls" (*hai hêmeterai psuchai*).[6] Pistorius discerns three broad uses of soul in the *Enneads*: (1) the third hypostasis, which he prefers to translate as "Principle of Life" rather than soul; (2) the World Soul; and (3) something close to soul, or life, with three

[3] As Armstrong notes, Plotinus' mention of Absolute Soul in V.9(5).13–14 reminds us that the assumption of individual Forms could never exclude the higher universal Forms of man and soul – higher forms in which the lower Forms participate. A.H. Armstrong, "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus", in *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), 55. Also see W. Helleman-Elgersma, *Soul-Sisters: A Commentary on Enneads IV 3 (27), 1–8 of Plotinus* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980), 46–7. Helleman-Elgersma notes that as hypostasis, soul does not need the prior existence of a soul archetype at the level of Intellect, to guarantee its being.

[4] On the question of whether the earth and plants have individuated species antecedents, notwithstanding their common growth soul, see Chapter 10 of this work.

[5] In addition, there are the higher spiritual beings, like gods and spirits, which precede man, in the hierarchy of gods, spirits, and man (VI.7(38).6).

[6] Emilsson calls this Plotinus' "orthodox view" because it emerges from his most meticulous account of the subject in IV.3(27).1–8. See E.K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Sense-Perception: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 23–4, 154, note 1.

gradations to it, which need not all be present in the same entity: (i) the lowest phase, which is the principle of growth to be found in all living things, (ii) discursive reason, which is the "essentially human trait", and (iii) the highest phase, which is the super-human aspect by which we know God, to be found only in man, but not necessarily active in all men.[7] To depict this range, Smith suggests that the Plotinian soul is "a most complex entity active at a number of ontological and cognitive levels from the highest form of reasoning down to the provision of the most basic requirements of life to the living being".[8] Finally, Torchia discerns three levels of soul: (1) All-Soul or Soul-Entire, (2) the World Soul or Cosmic Soul, and (3) individual souls.[9]

Plotinus terms the relatively unified summit of soul, or hypostasis soul, "all soul", "soul as a whole" (IV.3(27).4, 6) or "soul-entire".[10] As the third principle or hypostasis, after the One and Intellect, soul is the last of the divine realities. Just as Intellect is an expression and activity of the One, formed by the One, the hypostasis soul is an activity that springs from the substance of Intellect (V.2(11).1), moves around Intellect engaged in discursive thinking, and remains inchoate until it derives its form from Intellect, as its "lesser image" (V.1(10).7). It is a reality, which lies in the middle of the ontological order, between the indivisible Intellect – from which it holds the "indivisible" – and the divisible perceptible universe – in which it is divisible (IV.1(21).1, IV.3(27).19). Laden with greater multiplicity than Intellect – which is one-many, on account of the "duality" incurred by its self-intellection (IV.3(27).1) – the hypostasis soul is "both one and many and divided and indivisible" (IV.1(21).2). It brings the one to all beings in this world, thereby unifying them and it is one by "something else". It derives its unity by participating in the One, yet remains distinct, for it is not the One itself (VI.9(9).1). The hypostasis soul accrues multiplicity first due to its internal imbalance. Unlike Intellect, which holds a subtle balance of the same and other, soul loses its equilibrium. As Nikulin notes, its balance of the same and the other "dissolves" into the separate one *and* many, unlike the indissoluble one-many of Intellect.[11] The hypostasis soul is multiple also in terms of its "many powers" – like reasoning, desiring and apprehending (VI.9(9).1).[12] Moreover, after the individuation of souls, the hypostasis soul derives a further benign, but somewhat

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[7] P.V. Pistorius, *Plotinus and Neoplatonism: An Introductory Study* (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1952), 53.

[8] Smith, "Soul and Time", 335.

[9] N.J. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Being* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 60.

[10] J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 33.

[11] D. Nikulin, "Plotinus on Eternity", *Le Timée de Platon*, A. Neschke-Hentschke (ed.) (Paris: Éditions Peeters Louvain, 2000), 29.

[12] However, this does not apply to the lower soul. Its many powers do not render the lower soul multiple (IV.9(8).3).

more externalized multiplicity at the transcendental and terrestrial levels, on account of its manifold loci – the transcendental noetic loci occupied by species souls and the terrestrial loci occupied by the ensouled denizens of the universe. Plotinus tells us that soul is a multiplicity, because the beings of the universe, which it ensouls, are many (IV.1(21).2). Soul's terrestrial multiplicity perhaps imitates its noetic multiplicity.[13]

As the "offspring" of Intellect, the hypostasis soul is a rational form, at its upper end united to and thus filled with and sharing in Intellect and thinking. At its lower end, it generates that which is "worse" than and posterior to it[14] – and remains in touch with these progeny (V.1(10).7). Thus as Rist notes, soul is a "bridge being".[15] The intact, upper soul, which is "not naturally divisible", remains with Intellect, while that which is "attached to that higher world but has flowed out as far as these parts"– is indivisibly divided, by retaining a dual substantial holism amidst its protean presence. As Corrigan notes, Plotinus contends – following Plato's *Timaeus* (35A1–4) – that the soul must have a double substance (*ousia*): (1) the indivisible substance from which soul springs, and (2) its substance "to be divided in bodies". Nonetheless, soul remains indivisible in that it is present in each part as a whole and it is also present in all the parts as a whole.[16] Soul's oneness is "manifold" – it is one so that what holds the many beings of the universe together may be one. Thus as Plotinus puts it, "By its manifold oneness it dispenses life to all the parts, and by its indivisible oneness it directs them wisely" (IV.1(21).2).

When it enters any body, even the largest, by giving itself to the whole, soul "does not abandon its unity" (IV.1(21).1). Within the state of embodiment, soul gives itself "whole to the whole" (IV.2(4).1) – or as a unified whole to the whole body. Thus it accrues division only through its divided loci. It is because bodies are disparate – being subject to a "peculiar divisibility" – and unable to receive soul indivisibly that soul is divided in the terrestrial sphere. Soul is not "primarily divisible" as bodies are and its divisibility is an affection of the body and not of itself (IV.1(21).1). In fact, even soul's divisibility and multiplicity in the corporeal sphere have a contemplative hue – for soul unifies even as it besouls. Soul is divided for the purpose of bestowing forms, on that which is intrinsically divided,

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[13] The terrestrial multiplicity of the hypostasis soul will be greater than its noetic multiplicity, if its cosmic loci outnumber its noetic loci. Plotinus does seem to suggest as much, in V.7(18).1, when he says that a limited number of souls produce an infinite number of men.

[14] The things which come after soul are the species souls, nature, matter, becoming, alteration, time, and the world of sense.

[15] J.M. Rist, *Plotinus. The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 89.

[16] See K. Corrigan, "Essence and existence in the *Enneads*", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 113–14.

thereby unifying it. Thus, the multiplicity incurred through its divisibility is almost a sacrifice by soul, intended for the good of the perceptible universe. If soul were entirely indivisible and devoid of multiplicity, nothing soul grasped could be ensouled as a whole.

The World Soul (*hê tou pantos psuchê*) – termed the "Soul of the All", (IV.3(27).4, 6, 9) or the "soul of the Whole" (IV.3(27).8) – engenders the universe which it besouls (IV.3(27).6) and is clearly a senior "sister" to the individual species souls (IV.3(27).6, II.9(33).18). Sinnige notes that Plotinus' thoughts on the World Soul are comparable with the cosmology of the Presocratics. In earlier treatises, like IV.8(6).3, the Plotinian World Soul appears somewhat as the Presocratics saw it – almost as a soul-substance disseminated through the whole universe.[17] Despite its lower ontological rank caused by its species status, Plotinus, on occasion, appears to use the World Soul and the hypostasis soul interchangeably, leaving no intermediary between Intellect and the World Soul – a trait already observed by Blumenthal. Thus in II.3(52).17–18, the World Soul seems to be contiguous to Intellect in the ontological order and again in IV.8(6).8 Plotinus treats "all soul" and the World Soul as one.[18] This may explain why scholars like Zeller, did not maintain a clear distinction between the hypostasis soul and the World Soul.[19] However, later scholars like Deck, Wald, Blumenthal, Emilsson, and Torchia have clearly distinguished the two.[20] Wald discerns between "All-Soul" (hypostasis soul) and the "cosmic soul" (World Soul) – a mere particular soul – and takes the former to be that without which there are no individual souls. And yet, it does not itself exist except in individual souls. Blumenthal and Torchia clearly distinguish the hypostasis soul from the World Soul, taking the former to be the apex of a triangle with the latter included among the species souls distributed at the base.

Genus-Species Structure: Consubstantiality and Holism

In IV.3(27).2, 4–5 and his earlier works, III.9(13).1, 3, IV.9(8).5, and IV.8(6).3, Plotinus refers to a genus-species relation between the hypostasis soul and its species – a relation that imitates the genus-species structure of Intellect and its constituent real beings (IV.8(6).3, V.9(5).6). The hypostasis soul is the genus,

[17] Th.G. Sinnige, *Six Lectures on Plotinus and Gnosticism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 87.

[18] H.J. Blumenthal, "Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul in Plotinus", in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 58.

[19] Helleman-Elgersma, 89, 94–101.

[20] Deck, 33; Blumenthal, 58; Emilsson, 23; G. Wald, *Self-Intellection and Identity in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990), 160; Torchia, 66.

parent, substance, and *maker* (IV.3(27).2 and III.9(13).1) of the species souls.[21] The latter "sister" souls are the World Soul – a mere "partial soul" – and the pre-embodied, transcendental particular souls (IV.3(27).2, 5). As O'Meara notes, the process whereby the species or descended souls are made by the genus or universal soul suggests elements of a mode of production that is non-demiurgic.[22] Like the genus, the species souls are also one-and-many (IV.3(27).8). That the species souls are noetic is indicated clearly by Plotinus in the opening lines of IV.2(21).1, where he tells us that souls exist in the intelligible world. In VI.4(22).14, he refers to transcendental, noetic "pure souls".[23] Finally, in VI.4(22).4, Plotinus suggests that the species souls, which precede embodiment, are already in the whole – not in potency – but each in its active actuality, thus revealing its noetic stature. Here, Plotinus is clear that the hypostasis soul and its species are one-and-many well prior to corporeal divisions – for, "souls were both many and one before the bodies", and "the multitude of souls" did not come into existence because of "bodily magnitude" (VI.4(22).4). This indicates that the hypostasis soul, its species souls and its particularization of these species souls – all three belong to the transcendental realm. Gerson also notes that the unity and plurality of souls precede incarnation and explains this noetic individuation of souls in terms of the manifold intellects.[24] Since there is a multiplicity of intellects, which correspond each to a soul (of a human), the individuation of souls takes place prior to incarnation.[25]

As maker, soul-genus is pristine, intact and prior to embodiment and particularization. In IV.3(27).2, Plotinus seeks to protect the genus from losing this holism when it particularizes its species souls. If the hypostasis were splintered – to accommodate the inevitably splintered loci of its species – it would accrue multiplicity and thereby lose its holism and quietude. If the species were ordinary quantitative parts of the genus, the genus would be reduced by its division into species and each species would be less than the whole genus. Plotinus preserves the ontological intactness of the genus by arguing against the Stoic notion that the

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[21] Bréhier reflects that the multiplication of souls does not consist in a creation of new beings but in the fact that the particularity of each soul is revealed and the bond that links it to the universal soul is relaxed. See É. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. J. Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 68.

[22] D.J. O'Meara, "Gnosticism and the Making of the World in Plotinus", in *The Structure of Being and the Search for the Good* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 1998), 369.

[23] O'Daly's comment, with reference to VI.4(22).14 – that we already are in the transcendent and we can be so as individual souls – supports the notion that species souls are noetic. See G.J.P O'Daly's *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self* (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), 61.

[24] As Blumenthal notes, the individual *nous* is at one step below the hypostasis *nous* and its constituents, but at the same height as the hypostasis soul. See H.J. Blumenthal, "*Nous* and Soul in Plotinus: Some Problems of Demarcation", in *Soul and Intellect*, 218.

[25] L.P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London: Routledge, 1994), 63.

individual souls are parts of the World Soul.[26] The two are not parts of their common genus, but particular souls and the World Soul are different *species* of the same genus. To illustrate this intact particularization of the hypostasis soul, Plotinus uses the related analogies of a science and its theorems (IV.3(27).2) or knowledge and its parts and a seed and its parts (V.9(5).6, IV.9(8).5). A science can retain its holism despite its division into its constituent theorems, because each theorem contains the whole science "potentially" (IV.3(27).2). This potentiality goes in both directions. As Helleman-Elgersma suggests, each of the parts is potentially the whole, while the whole represents the potential of the parts and is potentially each part.[27] By analogy, soul-genus – an "independent reality" – will not be reduced by its particularization into its species, because each species soul contains the *whole* genus potentially. As already stated, the manifold loci of its species cause soul-genus to accrue only a benign multiplicity – in no way does this reduce its holism. Thus, Plotinus can say that the genus "gives itself to multiplicity and does not give itself" and is "adequate to supply itself to all and to remain one" (IV.9(8).5).

It is the common *potential* presence of this unfractured genus within each, which confers holism and consubstantiality on the species souls. Plotinus makes it abundantly clear that the World Soul is consubstantial with the particular species souls. Our souls and the World Soul are of the "same form" (IV.3(27).2) and alluding to Plato's *Timaeus* (41D4–7), Plotinus observes that "there is a universe in our soul, not only an intelligible one but an arrangement like in form to that of the soul of the world" (III.4(15).6). Thus, the true nature of soul is *equally* present wherever there are souls (V.9(5).13–14).[28] In its turn, consubstantiality confers on the species souls, not merely kinship, but an identity that constitutes their holism. Although Plotinus often reminds us that the sister souls all belong to the aegis of the genus – the World Soul and particular souls are not merely kindred. At the level of their actualized genus, their absolute consubstantiality constitutes their oneness and holism – they are "the same, and one, and each soul is all" (IV.3(27).2). This consubstantiality is patently clear in V.9(5).13 and II.2(14).2. In the former, individual souls are not copies of "Absolute Soul", or soul archetype. So long as they have true knowledge and are free of the body, they are not images of their Forms, but the Forms themselves. Thus they are wholly substantial, or

[26] Emilsson, 25. In IV.3(27).7, referring to Plato's *Philebus* (30A–B), Plotinus argues that Plato did not mean that our souls derive from the World Soul, but only intended to emphasize that the universe must have a soul, given that we do. To reiterate this point, Plotinus alludes to the *Timaeus* (41D7), where the "Demiurge" makes the World Soul and other souls from the same "mixing-bowl" – that is, consubstantial – but makes them in differing degrees of purity – indicated by the use of "second" and "third" class ingredients.

[27] Helleman-Elgersma, 68.

[28] *Ibid*., 33.

truly *soul*.[29] In the latter, like soul-genus, each individual soul – "in its own place" – circumambulates the One, in loving aspiration, thus revealing the quintessence of its consubstantiality with the genus.

This unity of the species souls is most clearly manifest in their absence of boundaries. Plotinus tells us that each soul is unmarked by boundaries and for this reason it is one (VI.4(22).14). Souls are thus borderless because of the unity in the intelligible world. Gerson notes that absence of boundaries between souls is to be accounted for by the immateriality of distinct intellects, which are separate, yet united. The resulting affinity of souls devolves upon Plotinus' notion of sympathy (*sympatheia*). Emilsson suggests that the doctrine of the unity of all souls seems to be required by Plotinus' notion of sympathy, which can occur only within things that have an organic unity – or the same soul. Indeed, in IV.3(27).8 Plotinus tells us that the particular species souls and the World Soul have a "community of feeling" because they derive from the "same".[30]

Levels of Individuation of Souls

For Plotinus, the individuation of particular souls does not stop at the species level – it continues down an ontological scale, at varying depths of declination from the hypostasis soul. This range of manifold levels of individuation lies between two limits – the noetic upper boundary of the species souls, which decline the least and the corporeal lower boundary of the earthly embodied souls, which decline the most. The hypostasis soul *makes* the noetic species souls and this is the first level of individuation of soul. Species souls exist as an active actuality, with their multitude gathered through the actively actual multiplicity and otherness of the "true All" in Intellect. Insofar as they decline the least from the hypostasis soul, they have the lowest degree of individuation and differentiation and constitute an ontological summit among particular souls. Multiplicity and differentiation are at their peak at the level of the embodied souls, which, as a whole, mark the ultimate in the degree of individuation of soul. This has already been observed by Blumenthal, who notes that souls are at their most separate and individual at the level of the embodied soul, in the range of faculties from discursive reason downwards.[31] Among embodied souls, depending on their concourse with their bodies, earthly souls are likely to be the most individuated – certainly more so than embodied souls in heaven – for the earthly body carries the greatest multiplicity and materiality and is the most differentiated. In fact, Armstrong notes that

[29] *Ibid*., 46.

[30] Gerson, 64 and Emilsson, 25. Gerson notes that all one can infer from the fact of sympathy is a specific identity among incarnated souls.

[31] Blumenthal, "Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul", 62.

Plotinus understood the earthly body to be the last and the lowest in the range of bodies.[32]

In between the species and the earthly levels there is a plethora of both bodiless and embodied particular souls. Regarding the latter, Armstrong suggests a range of progressively inferior bodies assumed by souls, in accordance with the depth of their descent from the celestial regions.[33] These vary from the pneumatic to the organic – with the bodies of the visible gods being the least material and most "mastered" (I.8(51).5) and bodilessness being the best state.[34] As the materiality of embodiment grows, the degrees of individuation of the corresponding souls and their otherness with respect to each other should increase. Thus the noetic otherness of the species souls – while more vivid – should entail less differentiation than corporeal otherness. Of all embodied souls, souls in heaven should be the least individuated, for their bodies are the most rarefied.

In between the species and earth bound embodied levels are the desire-laden souls and souls which are discarnate only in earthly terms. The latter lack "earthier" bodies – but are not beyond embodiment. In IV.7(2).13, when the lower soul acquires the more immanent desire to direct only a part of the sense-world, its individuation is enhanced – it becomes isolated, occupies the part in which it is and is sometimes in the body and sometimes out of it.[35] Similarly, in IV.8(6).4, the already individuated particular souls – presumably at the species level – grow

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[32] *Plotinus Ennead IV*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 82–3, note 2. The sequence in which ensoulment occurs may signify the degree of individuation of souls. The heavenly regions are the first to be ensouled and participate in soul first because they are better adapted for such participation. But the body of the earth is the last to be ensouled, less naturally adapted to participate in soul and far from the bodiless nature. Accordingly, the level of soul varies. All souls give the heaven the greatest and first part of themselves and illuminate the rest of the world with their secondary parts (IV.3(27).17). These prior parts are likely to be less individuated than the secondary parts.

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] See Armstrong's comments about the "pneumatic" or "astral" body in *Plotinus Ennead IV*, 82–3, note 2 and *Plotinus Ennead III*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 232, note 1. He suggests that Plotinus believed in the existence of such a body but found it to be of little philosophical importance or interest. Blumenthal also observes that if Plotinus did believe in some sort of *pneuma*, as a vehicle of soul, he did not regard it as very important. See H.J. Blumenthal, "Plotinus' Psychology: Aristotle in the Service of Platonism", in *Soul and Intellect*, 347. That incorporeality is the best state is true even of the gods. Thus in I.8(51).5, Plotinus suggests that the "gods with whom there is no matter" are better than the "visible", or, embodied gods, even though these latter master their matter.

[35] Such desires are immanent compared to the *poietic* desire of the hypostasis soul, descending to impart order and beauty in the sense-world, or Intellect's desire to possess everything (III.8(30).8). They are also immanent compared to the individual soul's "intelligent desire consisting in the impulse to return to itself springing from the principle from which they came into being" (IV.8(6).4).

further individuated when they display *tolmatic* signs of autonomy, separate from the All, "change from the whole to being a part", and "each go to their own".[36] This *increase* in individuation is weakening. Such souls weaken, or accrue multiplicity, when they remain isolated in distinctness from the All for a long "time",[37] cease to look towards the intelligible, sink into their corresponding individual parts, forfeit their prior immunity under the aegis of the World Soul, and descend towards their "parts". In IV.3(27).15, 17, Plotinus describes particular souls at their first level of declination from the noetic, species stature, as they emerge from the intelligible sphere and first enter the "space" of heaven, where embodiment begins.[38]

Given Plotinus' acknowledgment of Plato's doctrine of reincarnation, how are species souls related to embodied souls? Their noetic locus should place them outside the transmigratory cycle altogether. However, this need not dissociate them from the embodied state. Each species soul might still have its corresponding cohort of embodied souls, comprising incarnations of the same being. Souls which weaken and descend lower will still have their corresponding species souls in Intellect. Is the species soul then an exalted stage – a transcendental prototype, but not Form – of a legion of its embodied incarnations? Plotinus seems to indicate as much in V.7(18).1, when he suggests that a limited number of souls produce an infinity of men. Moreover, given that *all* souls "illuminate the heaven and give it the greatest and first part of themselves, but illuminate the rest of the world with their secondary parts" (IV.3(27).17), species souls – which are higher than souls in heaven – should each have a still greater cohort of lower souls.[39] Finally, in IV.2(21).1, Plotinus tells us that it is because souls have come "Thence" – from the intelligible – that souls are here too in the terrestrial sphere. In other words, Plotinus establishes a causal link between the noetic origin of souls, at the species level and the existence of individuated embodied souls and justifies the latter by the former – thus indicating unmistakably that every soul in the visible sphere must have its corresponding noetic species soul. The species level is thus an incipient, noetic stage of individuation, supporting cohorts of embodied souls. However, not

[36] Here in IV.8(6).4 Plotinus uses "universal soul" twice – once as what may be the hypostasis soul and once as the World Soul. He tells us that individual souls are free from sorrow if they remain with "universal soul" – perhaps soul-genus – in the intelligible. But when they are in heaven, with "universal soul" – or the World Soul – they can share in its government. Both cases of "individual soul" refer to their noetic species status, even though the former is higher than the latter.

[37] Time may not yet have appeared.

[38] As Armstrong observes, Plotinus shares a "cosmic religiosity" with other philosophers of late antiquity and is influenced by Plato's *Phaedrus* (246D6–247E6), when he imbues heaven with a "creeping spatiality", in IV.3(27).17. See *Plotinus Ennead IV*, 82–3, note 2 and 88, note 1.

[39] Although "greatest and first", this part should be below the noetic highest part of souls, for the latter never descends from the intelligible – not even to heaven.

all species souls need have embodied counterparts, for Plotinus tells us in IV.3(27).2 that partial souls become souls of things only "occasionally and incidentally". The species level should be discerned from the noetic apprehension of man in Intellect, in all his complexity (VI.7(38)3, 6) – including senses, bodies and the possibility of existing on different levels, from god to beast. Species souls transcend altogether, all such traits of immanence. Thus, the eternal species level is perhaps the transcendental summit of the individual soul and the second level of individuation just below the Forms, for it is the most unified among particular souls. The multiplicity of species souls is lower than that of the multitude of embodied souls, for the former derives from mere noetic otherness, whereas the latter run the risk of a greater corporeal multiplicity and otherness (*heterotês*). Insofar as corporeal individuality is more distinct than noetic individuality – corporeal otherness should exceed noetic otherness.

Plotinus' edifice of souls, with its admixture of unicity and distinctness, may be characterized as leaf shaped rather than triangular[40] – with a convergence of souls both at the Intelligible summit and the vegetal base and individuation and differentiation among the multitude of souls in between. At the middle levels, souls are distinct without being completely separate. Thus souls have willed to be divided but cannot reach complete division – "they keep identity and difference". This mix of unity and distinctness is a sign of the underlying genus-species structure of soul – for "each soul remains one, and all are one together" (IV.3(27).5). As Blumenthal notes, at the top all souls are together in the totality of soul – they are distinct but not separate. The species souls are "fastened [to the one] by their edges on their upper side". The highest parts of our souls are of the "same nature" as the higher parts of "universal soul", yet distinct from one another (IV.3(27).4–5). Thus like the World Soul, our higher souls too are immortal and capable of intellection, contemplation and ascent to the One. Like the World Soul, the individual soul also can direct and share in the care of the All. Blumenthal discovers that the World Soul and the multitude of individual souls converge again at the base: "So the souls that diverged at the top have converged again at the bottom". On occasion, Plotinus treats this lowest vegetal level of soul, which transmits life and growth, as part of the individual soul. Thus in VI.4(22).15, the ensouled body is enlivened into a living body and imbued with the affections, by receiving what must be this lower growth soul. In IV.9(8).3, like the higher soul, which is unified, or indivisible at the incorporeal, rational level, the lower growth soul, divided in the sphere of bodies is also one. At this lowest level, our souls are not individualized, for our bodies are parts of the world as a whole and we operate

[40] Unlike a leaf, with its graduated breadth, there is no reason to believe that Plotinus has a graduated incline in individuation of souls such that it reaches a medial climax after which it declines. Nonetheless, the analogy with the leaf may serve well to illustrate the convergence at the top and the base, and the admixture of distinctness and unity in between.

with a passive perception, in contradistinction with the intellective perception of the individual soul.[41]

Differences among Souls

Despite their consubstantiality and common noetic locus, soul-genus and species souls are unequal.[42] As Corrigan notes, although Plotinus develops the idea of soul as substance, he insists that this does not "commit" him to an identity of experience in different souls. Thus there can be diversity of experience – yet a larger unity of which we are "unconscious".[43] It is not as if the genus is one and the species are the many. The genus itself is one-and-many and the species – which are each one-and-many – are potentially unified at the level of their indwelling genus[44] and many at their disparate actively actual levels within the whole (VI.4(22).4). Unlike the genus, the species souls have parts.[45] The individual human soul can have two parts (II.1(40).5, IV.3(27).27), and sometimes three (II.9(33).2).[46] Yet the parts are not discrete. As Armstrong notes, in III.8(30).5, Plotinus interprets the ambrosia and nectar with which the charioteer feeds his horses in the *Phaedrus* myth (247E5–6), as the share which the lower parts of soul can receive of the divine vision of the higher.[47] Even the World Soul appears to have higher and lower parts, for Plotinus

[41] Blumenthal, "Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul", 61, 63.

[42] *Ibid*., 56, 59. Blumenthal has observed that Plotinus is more concerned with showing similarities among souls than defining their differences. Plotinus attributes the significant differences to what are, according to Blumenthal, "improperly described" as extraneous influences. Thus Plotinus does not have an adequate explanation of the moral differences among different individual souls that are coeval with their unicity – except to trace it to the extent of the soul's association with the body. Blumenthal also points out that Plotinus discusses the relations between different kinds of souls and different souls within a type, in accordance with what they do rather than what they are. Keeping in mind these reservations, I have tried to detect only the insubstantial, but unambiguous differences between the World Soul and individual souls, on the one hand and among individual souls on the other.

[43] Corrigan, 39.

[44] This cannot be a total oneness. It must be the one-and-many characteristic of soul-genus.

[45] As Blumenthal observes, in "Plotinus' Psychology", 348–9, Plotinus uses the tripartition of soul only when he is not actually analyzing how the soul works. Blumenthal also suggests that Plotinus may have found the tripartite division of soul more useful in ethical discussions (as in I.2(19).1) – for which it was invented in Plato's *Republic* (436 a ff.) – than the division into faculties and that Plotinus criticizes tripartition as a basis for serious psychology.

[46] For the dual origin of the human soul see Emilsson, 25–7.

[47] *Plotinus Ennead III*, 377, note 2.

depicts nature as the lower part of the World Soul.[48] However, the soul is not a synthesis, or composite of its parts.[49]

The unity at the level of the genus does not thwart the multiplicity of the species souls. In VI.4(22).4, Plotinus tells us clearly that the hypostasis soul's being one does not destroy the many species souls. Neither does the "one and whole" soul-genus thwart the many species souls from being in it, nor do the many "hinder" the one. As hypostasis, genus, substance, and the ontological prior of its species, soul-genus has to be quieter than its species souls – a quietude it can retain because of the benign nature of its multiplicity. Their actively actual noetic otherness and particularization into the species level, should characterize the species souls with a multiplicity greater than that of the genus. Although the difference in their multiplicity is insubstantial, it should posit the species souls ontologically below the genus.

The species sister souls are also insubstantially unequal among each other, in ways that unanimously affirm the World Soul as the stronger, more unified, capable "senior" sister. Given its unique transcendence of its body the World Soul lies in the middle of the ontological order – it is below the genus, which has no body but it is above those embodied souls, which cannot transcend their bodies. The World Soul and embodied souls differ in their degree of contiguity to soul-genus and Intellect and their corresponding quality and objects of contemplation. The World Soul does not separate itself from the genus, but remains there and dons its body, whereas the individual souls receive their pre-existing bodies when their senior sister is already ruling. The World Soul transcends its body and is thus free from affections. It abides in itself and makes and its progeny come to it, whereas the particular souls decline – they "themselves go to the things".[50] Moreover, the object of the World Soul's contemplation is "Intellect as a whole", whereas individual souls contemplate only their "own partial intellects" (IV.3(27).6). Given that such partial intellects are "distinct in otherness" and "not dissolved into a unity", souls which depend on partial intellects, are expressions of these intellects and are linked to the brevity of Intellect by what is highest and least divided in them. They are unfolded further than these intellects, having passed from "brevity to multiplicity" (IV.3(27).5). All this causes the World Soul to remain more unified, quiet and powerful than its sister souls.

Individual species souls also vary insubstantially among each other in their strength of contemplation and degree of declination from Intellect (IV.3(27).12). Although the same contemplative vision is in every soul, it is not present in the same way in every soul – in fact it is not even "in a like way" in every part of the soul (III.8(30).5). Moral differences among souls are indicated by the degree to which a soul's intellect is actualized. Some souls are better and others worse, some

[48] Deck, 33.

[49] Helleman-Elgersma, 42.

[50] The complex issue of the descent of the individual soul is being by-passed here.

more intelligent and some whose intelligence is less actualized (IV.8(6).3). Alluding to Plato's *Timaeus* (41D5–8), Plotinus tells us that while some souls are able to be closer to Intellect and live more the life There, those souls, whose "normal condition" is the opposite – by nature or chance – live more the life here below (IV.8(6).4).[51] Again in IV.3(27).6, alluding to Plato's *Timaeus* (41D7), Plotinus describes souls – presumably at the species level – as being "second" and "third" according to their distance from the higher world. Plotinus makes the point that even among "us", "not all souls have the same relationship to the realities There", and "they act by powers which are not the same", even though they all have the same powers. Finally, in IV.3(27).12 "souls of men" see their images as if in the "mirror of Dionysus" – that is, their images in the visible world – and leap down and come to be on that level, even though they remain connected with their own principle and Intellect. Insofar as these images vary morally, these souls will exist at varying levels in the visible world. Such moral differences and variations in powers of contemplation are traces of differing dispositions carved through previous incarnations. Citing Plato's point that souls' choices are governed by their previous lives, Plotinus suggests that souls can vary "very notably" in character and the activities of discursive reason, as a result of their prior lives (IV.3(27).8). Finally, at the corporeal level, souls are individuated by embodiment itself, the degree of attachment to bodies and the qualities of bodies.[52] Different bodies indicate particular souls of different ontological levels, for each soul comes down only to that body which best resembles its disposition (IV.3(27).12).[53]

Levels of Discursion in Soul

Plotinus ascribes movement to every level of soul – the hypostasis as well as the species souls. The movement of soul participates in its paradigm – the non-discursive movement of Intellect – of which it is an analogous and homonymous image. The life of Intellect is quiet and restful in contradistinction with the disquiet of soul. Where the life of Intellect is balanced, holding the equilibrium of the same and the other, that of soul is weakened because it is unable to hold this balance. Thus thinking in soul is necessarily discursive for there is an inability to grasp the

[51] Why Plotinus uses "nature" or "chance" to explain fundamental moral differences among souls, is perplexing.

[52] Blumenthal observes that there is a contradiction in Plotinus' explanation of the influence of body on soul. Bodies are matter informed by the World Soul, so that the differences among bodies should reflect the contents of Intellect. Yet, Plotinus often tells us that the compound of the body and the lower level of soul determine the nature of the individual. See Blumenthal, "Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul", 60.

[53] As Torchia notes, when Plotinus takes souls to tend to the bodily counterpart with which they are most compatible, he is in keeping with a common Greek religious belief. See Torchia, 79.

object of knowledge with immediacy.[54] This unbalanced state of soul is also manifested in its "unquiet power" (III.7(45).11) – indicative perhaps of an unbalanced contemplation of its prior – to be contrasted with the quietude of the unfallen soul in Intellect in V.3(49).6.

In what sense then is the movement of soul an image of that of Intellect? Strange points out that it is fundamental to Neoplatonism to distinguish soul from Intellect by positing soul as that which thinks discursively, as opposed to Intellect, which thinks everything at once. While Plotinus retains this general distinction, his soul and Intellect are more nuanced. On the one hand, undescended soul has a non-discursive life and on the other there is process, change and history to Intellect. Yet soul's discursive capacity lingers. As Strange notes, although in IV.3(27)–4(28) Plotinus describes the conscious life of the undescended soul as not involving discursive thought, undescended soul nonetheless differs from Intellect in that it retains the *potential* for thinking discursively (IV.4(28).1).[55] Regarding the *duratio* of Intellect, it is not yet clear whether movement in Intellect has priority and duration, for Plotinus' thoughts on change and priority in Intellect are notably ambiguous. As Armstrong points out, Plotinus is not always successful in confining his descriptions of the eternal life of Intellect within the limits imposed by the notion of a non-durational eternity, which he strongly insists upon. On the one hand, he asserts the changeless character of Intellect, devoid of "before" and "after". On the other hand he ascribes change and history to Intellect. Armstrong cites the following passages, among others, to illustrate his conclusion that Plotinus' accounts of the eternal life of Intellect are not fully consistent. First, there are numerous passages where Plotinus insists on the changeless character of Intellect and presents it as having no "before" and "after", no transition from one state to another, and no *process* of self-making or self-knowing: (1) I.1(53).8, where Intellect is universally available to us because it is eternal and unchanging; II.4(12).4–5, III.2(47).1, V.1(10).4, 6, V.8(31).6 and VI.3(44).27, where Plotinus insists on the unchanging, durationless character of the eternal life of Intellect; (2) I.3(20).4, I.8(51).2, II.9(33).1, V.1(10).11, III.7(45) and V.3(49).9, where Plotinus contrasts the process of discursive reasoning in soul and its time-life with the static intuition of Intellect and its eternity; and I.4(46).3, III.2(47).4, V.2(11).1, where Plotinus contrasts the restless successive life with the quiet, unchanging and self-contained life of Intellect. Second, there are also those passages (III.6(26).3, VI.4(22).5, IV.3(27)–4(28)) where Plotinus illustrates the importance of the idea of the static and unchanging noetic life, not by a contrast with soul, but by raising soul to the unchanging level. In IV.3(27)–4(28), Plotinus denies memory not only to Intellect, thus asserting its static eternity, but also to souls – not only in the

[54] Nikulin, 29–30.

[55] S.K. Strange, "Plotinus on the Nature of Eternity and Time", in *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*, L.P. Schrenk (ed.) (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 49, note 75.

intelligible world (IV.4(28).1) – but also in their highest celestial embodiment. Finally, by contrast, there are those passages where Plotinus ascribes process, change and history to Intellect: (1) III.8(30).8, wherein Intellect unravels itself into a multiplicity; (2) V.8(31).3–4, VI.7(38).13, where the internal movement (*kinesis*) of Intellect, which is inseparably coupled with its rest (*stasis*), is described in terms that clearly imply duration and history.[56]

More than mere duration, there is also, as Blumenthal points out, a "super-*logismos*" in Intellect. In IV.4(28).10, Plotinus tells us that we must "completely" eliminate "before" and "after" from Intellect, the "Demiurge", and give "him a single unchanging and timeless life".[57] Intellect's non-discursive thinking (*noêsis*) is to be contrasted with soul's linear discursive thinking (*dianoia* or *logismos*), which proceeds from one object to another, until it achieves what *noêsis* attains – the immediate grasp of its object. But earlier, in IV.3(27).18, Plotinus allows a "static activity" for Intellect, which Blumenthal describes as a "super-*logismos*" and Trouillard as "pure *logismos*". Soul should not have the lower level of discursive reasoning (*logismos*) before it leaves the intelligible. *Logismos* comes to it – not before and after embodiment – but during its embodied state, here below, when it is already weakened and in "perplexity", for to need *logismos* indicates attenuation of Intellect in respect of its self-sufficiency. Plotinus then asks how souls here can have *logismos* if soul there has none. He solves this problem by ascribing to souls in the intelligible a potential *logismos* that derives from Intellect as a "static activity" or "super-*logismos*".[58]

In the light of this brief background of the possibility of *duratio* and priority in Intellect, Smith is right in suggesting that the presence of "before" and "after" in Intellect provides the model for their significance in time at the level of soul.[59] But now a new question arises. What are the levels of discursion in soul? There is, as Smith notes, more than one type of discursive reason in Plotinus' thought and Plotinus sometimes appears to deny sequence or "before" and "after" to the level of discursive reason and sometimes to accept it. The hypostasis soul is bereft of discursion at its highest noetic level. At a level below, it gains the higher non-eternal, but "everlasting" or sempiternal discursion. At the lowest, there is a level of discursive reason that operates in time.[60] Plotinus depicts the highest non-discursive level of soul in V.3(49).17 as also in the context of memory. In

[56] A.H. Armstrong, "Eternity, Life and Movement in Plotinus' Accounts of *Nous*", in *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), 67–74.

[57] As Smith notes, Plotinus describes this life of Intellect as "timeless" rather than eternal, perhaps to discern it more specifically from the life of soul, which he later equates with time itself. See "Soul and Time", 340.

[58] Blumenthal, "*Nous* and Soul in Plotinus", 209–10.

[59] A. Smith, "Eternity and time", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 211.

[60] *Ibid*., 211–12; Smith, "Soul and Time", 335, 338.

V.3(49).17, Plotinus tells us that while Intellect is in contact with it, soul cannot speak and discursion becomes redundant to it. It is only afterwards that soul is able to reason about it. The purpose of sequence in discursive thought is to facilitate enunciation through speech. It is in order to articulate things in words that discursive thought brings about sequence – it has to consider one thing after another. Contact with Intellect can make soul transcend discursion because there is no discursive thought, or "transition from one to the other" in Intellect (IV.4(28).1). Blumenthal points out that when Plotinus wants to stress the transcendence of the hypostasis soul or "soul as such" – as opposed to the World Soul or the individual soul – he denies it the distinctive characteristics peculiar to it. Thus in IV.4(28).1, the hypostasis soul has no memory in the higher world, where all things are present and there is an absence of discursion. Intellect has no need of memory because it is always in possession of its objects of knowledge. This exemption from memory and discursive thinking is extended also to the World Soul and the souls of heavenly bodies (Chapters 6–7). Moreover, even star souls lack discursive thinking, for they neither seek knowledge nor suffer perplexity (Chapter 6). If this is true of even star souls, such lack of discursiveness *must* characterize the hypostasis soul. In II.9(33).2, Plotinus' explicit statement – that soul governs body without discursive reason (*dianoia*), but orders it by the wonderful power it derives from its contemplation of Intellect – could apply to the World Soul or the hypostasis soul. Blumenthal uses this passage to conclude again that the hypostasis soul can transcend discursive reason.[61]

At the next level below Intellect, the highest, timeless discursive reason operates in soul. In fact, in IV.4(28).16 Plotinus first denies that sequence at all and specifically temporal sequence are marks of soul. Sequence applies to the things soul makes and not soul itself, for all the *logoi* of things are simultaneous and together. Then he counters this by reminding us that there is separateness in another way "even there", as also priority in another way. As Smith notes, the "even there" here refers to the higher level of soul and Plotinus is making a clear statement that there is a kind of sequence even in higher soul.[62] This higher discursion of soul – manifested in the "before" and "after" in the movement of soul at a level below Intellect – is not measurable by time, for its priority and succession are logical and not temporal.[63] Thus in III.7(45).13, this higher discursion is displayed in the "before" and "after" in the movement of soul as an order (*taxis*) that is pre-temporally causal or logical and it is this that apparently

[61] Blumenthal, "*Nous* and Soul in Plotinus", 209.

[62] "Even there" is taken from Smith's translation of IV.4(28).16. Smith suggests that Armstrong's translation – "in the intelligible world" – is a little misleading. See "Soul and Time", 339.

[63] The time here is physical time. As Smith notes, the higher discursion of soul is not measurable by time in the sense of our concept of time drawn from the physical world. See "Eternity and time", 211.

"generates" time.[64] The sequence of "before" and "after" in this world is only an imitation of the truer "before" and "after" of soul. Plotinus describes this movement of soul as something interfaced between eternity and time. It is posterior to eternity – for it is below Intellect – but "everlasting" and prior to time. In being "everlasting", the progression of the movement of the hypostasis soul is perdurable sempiternally and not eternally.[65]

Conclusion

Plotinus' edifice of soul is a unique blend of two extremes – a unity of souls that transcends mere affinity at one end and differences among souls that are to some extent culpably earned, at the other. It is a complex prismatic array of consubstantial souls that descend to varying depths of declination and individuation, yet retain identity with each other at the level of their indwelling soul-genus. It is a unity amidst diversity that on the one hand reflects the immense ontological gulf between the third hypostasis and the nadir of the visible world and on the other, rescinds this very gulf through the consubstantiality permeating this edifice.

[64] Plotinus describes the discursive thought of soul also in V.1(10).4, 7, IV.3(27).18 and IV.4(28).1, 16. For the question as to whether movement *per se* can beget, see Chapters 9–10 of this book.

[65] For the difference between "eternal" and "sempiternal", see Nikulin, 20–21. Nikulin argues that while "eternal" (*aiônion*) expresses in Plotinus the idea of participation (eternal is that which *participates* in eternity), sempiternal (*aidion*) expresses predication (something is only predicated or *said* to be sempiternal).

Chapter 5

Levels of Self

In Plotinus' thought, the human subject has a mobile and trans-hypostatic self that tours the circuit, from the Intelligible through the historical, back to the One. Several commentators (Dodds, Trouillard, Blumenthal, Sinnige, and O'Daly) have noted the variety, subtlety and flexibility in the notion of the self in the *Enneads*. Sinnige remarks that in Plotinus' thought, human personality is a variable entity, depending on the metaphysical level of existence at which the individual lives. The human person is defined ethically as the best part of ourselves.[1] Hadot and Schürmann suggest that for Plotinus, human consciousness – and along with it, our "self" – is like a median interleafed between two "zones" of darkness – the silent, unconscious life of our "self" in God and the silent, unconscious life of the body – such that the levels of the self do not annul one another.[2] Yet, as O'Daly observes, citing Henry, there is no word for "person" or self in Greek and Plotinus himself has no fixed word and hence no "canonized" concept for the "self".[3] This observation is echoed by later commentators like Gerson, who reiterates that there is no agreed-upon, unique word to designate the concept of the self in Greek. Almost universally, simple pronouns like *autos* and *hêmeis* are used. Plato uses, "the man within the man",[4] and Plotinus *autos*, *hêmeis* or the reflexive, *hauton*.[5]

Notwithstanding this taxonomical hiatus, the architecture of the *Enneads* makes room for the *concept* of the self, which has long been acknowledged and examined by commentators. In the fifties and earlier, scholars like Bréhier, Trouillard, Harder, Dodds, and Himmerich discuss the formulation and significance of the self. Dodds points out that Plotinus was the first to have

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[1] See H. Oosthout, *Modes of Knowledge and the Transcendental: An Introduction to Plotinus Ennead 5.3 [49]* (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1991), 33; H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology – His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague, 1971), 109 ff.; Th.G. Sinnige's *Six Lectures on Plotinus and Gnosticism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 99–100; G.J.P O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self* (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), 5.

[2] P. Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, trans. M. Chase (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 29, 34; R. Schürmann, "The Philosophy of Plotinus. Doctor Reiner Schürmann's Course Lectures", inventory established by Pierre Adler (New York: The New School for Social Research, Department of Philosophy, 1994, photocopied), 7–8.

[3] O'Daly, 89.

[4] L.P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London: Routledge, 1994), 139.

[5] O'Daly, 89–90.

discerned clearly between the tenets of soul and ego and Trouillard notes that the ego oscillates endlessly.[6] Later, in the sixties, scholars like Hadot, von Ivánka, Warren, Blumenthal, Armstrong, Rist, and Mamo also recognize the importance of this concept of the self. In more recent times, Emilsson, Wald, Gerson, Schürmann, Oosthout, and Sinnige study and apply this concept. A particularly notable and exhaustive study of the Plotinian self is that by O'Daly.[7]

In the *Enneads*, Plotinus traces the levels of the singular self and the plural "we" in at least two related ways – through the existential trajectory of the self and its interior, ontological range. For the purposes of our present inquiry, only a small segment of each is significant – that which reflects the relationship between the self and soul-genus. Nevertheless, a fuller discussion of the self is warranted by our need to comprehend the role of the "we" in III.7(45).11. In this chapter, after exploring its notional presence in the *Enneads*, the existential and ontological range of the Plotinian self are examined for the express purpose of studying Plotinus' cosmological "we" in Chapter 10. Accordingly, there are three sections: (1) Tacit Presence of Self, (2) Existential Trajectory of Self, and (3) Interior Range of Self.

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[6] Gerson, 139, disagrees with Dodds that Plotinus was the first philosopher to have maintained such a distinction and claims that Plotinus simply made a more extensive use of it than anyone before him. Similarly, Oosthout, 33, maintains that although Plotinus has enriched the history of psychology with valuable insights, the discovery of an ego is unlikely to be included among these. He doubts whether the Plotinian "we" can be compared to the idea of a conscious ego – in the Cartesian and post-Cartesian sense of an independent and distinct faculty in the human mind that ensures the unity of perception and thought and is somehow, immediately present to itself.

[7] É. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. J. Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 72–3; J. Trouillard, *La Purification Plotinienne* (Paris, 1955), 26 f.; R. Harder, *Kleine Schriften*, 269; E.R. Dodds, "Tradition and Personal Achievement in the Philosophy of Plotinus", *Journal of Roman Studies* 50 (1960): 6, 1–7; W. Himmerich, "Platonische Tradition in didaktischer Reflexion: Plotin-Comenius-Scheler", *Parusia, Festgabe für Johannes Hirschberger*, 495; Hadot, 23–34; E. von Ivánka, *Plato Christianus. Uebernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln, 1964), 84 f.; E.W. Warren, "Consciousness in Plotinus", *Phronesis* 9 (1964): 83–97; H.J. Blumenthal, "Did Plotinus believe in Ideas of Individuals?" in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 61–80; A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 225; J.M. Rist, "Integration and the Undescended Soul in Plotinus", *American Journal of Philology* 88 (1967): 410–422; P.S. Mamo, "Forms of Individuals in the *Enneads*", *Phronesis* 14 (1969): 77–96; E.K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Sense-Perception: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 25–30; G. Wald, *Self-Intellection and Identity in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990),151–83; Gerson, 139–51; Schürmann, 7–8; Oosthout, 31–42; Sinnige, 86–100; O'Daly.

Tacit Presence of Self

The first clue of the presence of the self in Plotinus' thought is its distinction from its bearers – a distinction underscored by the continuum it maintains amidst its flowing metamorphosis, in contrast with its bearers, which change according to the metaphysical locus of the self. The key distinction between the self and its bearers lies in their differing ontological scope. A common thread links the evolving stages of the self in one shared identity – whose historical and lower psychical aspects can be largely subjective – whereas the hypostatic nature of the self's bearers is perhaps revealed best in their objectified, real, and ontologically static domains. As the self *qua* "we" descends, the bearer of the self shifts from manifold noetic beings – such as "men", "gods", "pure souls", or the primeval noetic man in VI.4(22).14 – to noetic soul, and further down to the descended soul which bears the lower levels of historical man. Thus, although the distinction between the Plotinian self and its bearers is not total – for the self does not wear its bearer like vesture – this distinction attests to the presence of the self.[8] Not always borne by the soul, the Plotinian self fluctuates from the hypernoetic to the intelligible and the psychic and sometimes degrades itself still further down.

The commentaries on this distinction are noteworthy. Gerson points out that Plotinus explicitly distinguishes the self from the soul in some way in I.1(53).13 and the self from the "compound being" in II.3(52).9. Bréhier suggests that unlike the hypostasis soul, the self *qua* "we" is not a "thing" but an essentially subjective activity, which cannot be objectified or hypostatized. By contrast, our soul with its various psychic activities, lies objectified before it – "our soul extends before *us* like an object". Our self, or what we are in ourselves, is not identical in content with our soul. But Oosthout maintains that the distinction Plotinus makes, is not that between an "ego" (a center of consciousness that focuses its attention intermittently on different psychical functions) and the "soul", which consists of all psychical activities and stretches itself out before the "ego" as an object. Rather, "we" are the whole of our psychical activities, among which, the power of reasoning is the most definitive.[9] Emilsson also discerns between the human self and individual human soul, but identifies the former with the latter because the soul is flexible – it cannot be identified with any particular faculty or set of faculties, although Plotinus attributes reason and sense-perception to it. The soul *is* these faculties (perception and reasoning) when it so acts and their actual functioning is identical with its so acting. But the soul is not essentially any such faculty. Thus the human soul is "mobile" and fluctuating in a way that the vegetative soul is not. Unlike the former, the vegetative soul cannot choose to return to its origin, even though it is linked with the higher forms of soul and with

[8] Bréhier, 72, notes this incomplete distinctiveness when he comments that the self *qua* "we" is distinct from soul without being completely distinct from it.

[9] See Gerson, 140, Bréhier, 72–3 and Oosthout, 35.

Intellect. Insofar as the individual human soul fluctuates, so does the self *qua* "man".[10]

The presence of the self is perhaps most patent in its lone stance before the One, bereft of all bearers. In VI.7(38).35, the self stands alone before the lone One, bereft of even Intellect (*nous*)and soul (*psuchê*), its former bearers.[11] Finally, the presence of the self is also attested by the intensely personal nature of the experience of the inner state, mainly in earlier treatises, like IV.7(2).10 and the more mundane experience of our awareness as active historical subjects, in III.1(3).4. Thus O'Daly is right when he points out that Plotinus is clearly aware of the importance of the concept of the self, in his depictions of the human subject, at the varying levels of existence possible for man. In fact, as O'Daly notes, in Plotinus' *Enneads* it is "assumed" that the individual self exists.

That the self exists in the *Enneads* – only theoretically and without a formal appellation – is perhaps characteristic of antiquity itself. O'Daly speculates that Plotinus did not explicitly establish the category of the self because of the conservative tradition of the philosophy of his day, in which originality was not in demand.[12] Oosthout maintains that the concept of the "self" – understood as an ego that forms the center of the human personality – seems to have emerged rather late in antiquity.[13] Sinnige points out that there was no clear terminology for "person" or "personality" in antiquity, although the concept was present in many ethical theories. The human person was defined only in universal terms, valid for every human being and individual characteristics were not taken to imply individual duties or responsibilities. The Stoics – a notable exception – were the first to start a theory of the human person – perhaps on account of their philosophical preoccupation with the problem of man's place in this world. Thus, in Cicero's account of Panaetius' philosophy, there are two types of persona – the general one, defined by reason and an individual one.[14] Stoicism aside, Plotinus' notion of the self perhaps has a unique place in antiquity – in its flexibility, subtlety and ontological range. This is recognized by commentators like O'Daly, who adds that Plotinus' concept is also to be discerned from modern idealistic versions of the self, like Fichte's *Ich*.[15] This is also recognized by Emilsson, who claims that Plotinus' concern with the self was a "novelty". His predecessors had noted that we are identical with our souls or with the faculty of reason, but nobody before Plotinus had put the question of the self in the foreground. Much of the psychology of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics is, in effect, an attempt to deal with the self. In

[10] Emilsson, 28–9.

[11] O'Daly, 89, observes that when Plotinus describes the *apokatastasis* of the individual soul in VI.7(38).34, what is transformed is neither *psuchê* nor *nous*.

[12] *Ibid*., 20, 89–90.

[13] Oosthout, 32.

[14] Sinnige, 89–94.

[15] O'Daly, 5–6.

trying to pinpoint what distinguishes us from "brutes", they are, in fact, trying to answer the question, "What are we?" It is Plotinus, however, who brings a new tone to the issue, through his continuing concern with locating the "we ourselves" in the ensemble of the body-soul compound and the various psychic faculties.[16]

Existential Trajectory of Self

In Plotinus' thought, the One is the absolute Subject or Self – it is "primarily self and self beyond being" (VI.8(39)14).[17] The ontic self first appears in Intellect, below the One, where it is the intelligible or "real nature" of man, to be regained when he returns in contemplation to the One.[18] Plotinus tells us that this incipient self is that of one of those noetic gods who "came Thence" (I.2(19).6). In VI.4(22).14, its corresponding nascent "we", which precedes time and becoming, is characteristically one-many, for it is at once discrete and unified – an assemblage of different classes of noetic beings, only one among which are "men". It is significantly discrete and varied in the myriad ontological ranks it includes, such as "men who were different", "gods", "pure souls",[19] and "intellect".[20] Yet it is also cohesive in that these types of beings are united with the whole of reality. This inception of the "we" has to be ontologically posterior to the eternal emanation of species souls from the genus. The species souls have to first emerge into existence, as "pure souls", before they can comprise one of the bases of this incipient, authentic, and innocent "we". What unifies "us", the discrete members of this "we", is Plotinus' original noetic man – a primeval being corresponding to this primeval "we". This transcendental man, who is prior to reasoning (VI.7(38).9), is neither the trace of the human soul, which lingers perpetually in the noetic realm (IV.8(6).8), nor the self that ascends through Intellect. It is not even the noetically anticipated sensible man of VI.7(38).36. This eternal man was "each one of us",[21] through our participation in it – a participation that Plotinus describes in sonic

[16] Emilsson, 29.

[17] For O'Daly's and Bréhier's affirmation that the One is the absolute Subject or Self see O'Daly, 91.

[18] Here "ontic" is used as Deck uses it. It means "being-ish" and pertains to finite substance. See J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), viii.

[19] In this "we", "pure souls" are distinct not only from "men" and "Intellect", but also from "gods", for Plotinus discerns between gods and souls. In VI.7(38).6, he tells us: "He who is before the soul is more of a spirit, or rather is a god".

[20] As O'Daly, 61, observes, when Plotinus identifies "men" at once, with "souls" *and* intellect, the self in question is – not exclusively man as Intellect – but the man whose soul is *one with the intelligible.*

[21] O'Daly, 61, points out that this does not mean that we exist as individual intelligences.

terms. Our being "parts of the intelligible" and "belonging to the whole" takes the form of this transcendental ideal man (VI.4(22).14).

The self – which as yet is the archetypal intelligible man[22] – begins its panhypostatic journey by descending from this pristine noetic state to the terrestrial, historical level, where it is warranted by the individual descended soul. Although this descent is largely metaphysical and somewhat distinct from the general descent of soul, which is complex and nuanced, Plotinus often associates it with "accretions", which bring in their trail, unmistakable intimations of culpability. The descent of the self is usually detected in the appearance of these accretions, which encrust the purer inner self and constitute the false or shadow self. Thus the descended self is always fractured by a wedge of otherness between its authentic interiority and shadowy exteriority. Such a conjoint of the transcendent and the immanent renders us amphibious.[23] In Plotinus' thought, it is within this conjoint that the dialectic between the true and the shadow self ensues, a dialectic amplified in the sphere of embodiment. Otherness ensues when *another* man – described by Armstrong as the "petty, empirical ego"[24] and by Smith as the "external man" who is in time[25] – desiring to exist, encrusts himself around the archetypal noetic man. Invasive in its infusion of the burden of the false self – this other man is an intruder who represents our dross of multiplicity in excess of that of the pristine noetic "we", for we are culpable – it is "we" who have added the former to the latter "afterwards". Thus "we" now descend to a conjoint of that perfect Intelligible man and this other man and when the former is inactive and absent, "we" are just the latter (VI.4(22).14). A purer – but nevertheless tainting – conjoint self can reappear in the ascent to the One. Using Plato's procession of gods in *Phaedrus* (246E4 ff.), in a different way,[26] Plotinus tells us in I.2(19).6, that purified man – devoid of accretion or "involuntary impulse" – will be one of those noetic gods who follow the First or the Good. If however he retains any such impulse, he will remain at the lower level of a celestial conjoint – a god or spirit who is double, or rather, a god with another conjoined nature.[27]

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[22] As O'Daly, 59, concludes, Plotinus regards the "intelligible self" as the archetypal individual and the goal of the individual's ethical striving.

[23] *Ibid*., 25.

[24] *Plotinus Ennead VI*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 271.

[25] A. Smith, "Soul and Time in Plotinus", in *Psukhe – Seele – Anima*, J. Holzhausen (ed.) (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1998), 343.

[26] In Plato, it is the philosophical souls that follow Zeus, the first god, who leads the procession. As Armstrong observes, Plotinus uses Plato's language, but in a different way. By the First, he means the Good and by the gods who follow, he means the divinities in Intellect. See *Plotinus: Porphyry on Plotinus Ennead I*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 142, note 1.

[27] O'Daly, 55, notes that Plotinus' use of *daimôn* in I.2(19).6 is different from that in III.4(15).6. Here the state of *daimôn* is a fall, whereas, in III.4(15).6, man, when good is

With the conjoint of the intelligible and the accretive man, in VI.4(22).14, ensues the historical stage, wherein, the individual soul – which in its "pure" state was only one among other bearers of the original self in Intellect (VI.4(22).14) – now plays a larger role in bearing the self and warranting its individuality. Within the compound of soul, it is the structure of soul that informs Plotinus' notion of identity. As O'Daly notes, it is the process of individualization through the outgoing of individual souls from the hypostasis soul that guarantees the assumption in Plotinus that the individual self exists – a postulation also evident in III.1(3).4.[28] In this early work, deriving perhaps from Numenius – arguing against what may be the Stoic notion of an all pervasive World Soul that accomplishes everything and determines our actions, leaving no room for individual culpability – Plotinus exclaims that if this were the case then the very moral and volitional basis of the self *qua* "we" would disappear: "So, on this assumption, we are not ourselves, nor is there any act which is our own. We do not reason, but our considered decisions are the reasonings of another". Plotinus then defends a definitive individuality, rooted in a culpability deriving from our ethical essence: "There must be actions and thoughts that are our own; each one's good and bad actions must come from themselves, and we must not attribute the doing of bad actions at least to the All". This essence, or substance of the individual soul – and thereby, of the self *qua* soul – is defined in terms of "moral integrity" again in V.9(5).13.[29]

The sojourn of the embodied self originates in heaven. After they have first "peeped out" of the intelligible world, some souls don bodies in heaven and go by their means to "earthier" bodies (IV.3(27).15). The historical self is only one member of a legion, which mills below in a transmigratory sequence that constitutes a facade to the truer intellectual self. Yet the two levels are not disjointed. Although Plotinus warns that the self *qua* individual souls may forget God and descend accordingly, when enamored by the visible world (V.1(10).1) and their reflections in the mirror of Dionysus, even these are not cut off from their own principle and Intellect – their heads remain set high in heaven (IV.3(27).12). Despite this link, there remains an otherness between the higher and lower self – even though the higher self *qua* soul nourishes the lower with its divine vision (III.8(30).5). The otherness between the primeval intelligible man and the accretive other man is imitated and amplified in the terrestrial sphere, when the historical self accrues accretions through "irrational desires and passions" (IV.7(2).10). Thus, as O'Daly observes, the real Heracles and the *eidôlon* or historical Heracles stand in the same relation as the "man in the transcendent" and "the other man" in

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called a *daimôn* – and Plotinus adds, man's *daimôn* is the One itself.

[28] O'Daly, 20.

[29] See *Plotinus Ennead III*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 18–19, note 1. Also see O'Daly, 20 and W. Helleman-Elgersma, *Soul-Sisters: A Commentary on Enneads IV 3 (27), 1–8 of Plotinus* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980), 44.

VI.4(22).14.[30] In IV.3(27).27 and I.1(53).12, referring to Homer's *Odyssey* (11.601 ff.), Plotinus describes the accretions constitutive of the false self, as the shade of Heracles in Hades – in contradistinction with the inner, divine self or the real Heracles, who exists among the gods.[31] It is noteworthy that despite its counterfeit nature, Plotinus takes this shade to be "our self", perhaps because it has a limited influence on the future of the self, through the power of its memories – even though these fade in time. In the afterlife, it can remember its historical experiences, even unto its next incarnation (IV.3(27).27). This image or shade is part of the self, also because it can determine the destiny of the self *qua* soul. If the soul does not free itself from the *eidôlon*, the latter has the power to drag it down to its own low level (VI.4(22).16). This exterior, historical "outside shadow of man" (*eidôlon*), projected as a "toy", and engaged in life on the stage that is the earth, is distinct from the "soul within" (III.2(47).15). It represents the dross of multiplicity in excess of that of the truer soul-genus, within the particular soul bearing the historical self. Despite these accretions, our ties with Intellect are not severed, for something of our soul always remains in the intelligible (IV.8(6).8). Thus, even though the *eidôlon* is part of our self, from the higher standpoint, it is not that important – it is no more than the character played by the actor on the world stage (III.2(47).15). The contemplative sage superior to the active and heroic Heracles – who represents merely the man of middle virtue – will forget this image when he contemplates the intelligible (IV.3(27).32). The self *qua* soul *ought* to be relieved of accretions in the after life – the *eidôlon* is meant to be torn apart from the higher authentic self. Once philosophy has freed it completely, the higher soul reposes in the intelligible, while the *eidôlon* goes to the "worse place" (Hades) alone (VI.4(22).16).

While the historical personality, or *eidôlon* – which survives the death of its bearer and possesses its historical life – is an aspect of the embodied soul and part of "our self", the ensouled body, modified by its trace of soul – inferior to the *eidôlon*[32] – is merely our "tool"(*organon*) and not an essential part of us (IV.7(2).1). Here Plotinus accepts the traditional Platonic definition of self as soul, as in the *Alcibiades*[33] – the soul is more than merely the bearer of the self – it *is* the self. However, later, in IV.4(28).18, Plotinus describes the ensouled body as an appendage of the self. While "we ourselves" – defined by Plotinus as the dominant and essential part of us – are not the ensouled body, "we" are also not "clear" of it. It depends on and is "attached" to us. Still later, in 1.1(53).10, Plotinus tells us that

[30] O'Daly, 27.

[31] As Armstrong suggests, this philosophical explanation of Plotinus had precursors which may have originated in the Old Academy or post-Platonic Pythagoreanism. See *Plotinus Ennead IV*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 12, note 2.

[32] O'Daly, 29.

[33] The *Alcibiades* is perhaps not by Plato himself, but originates from his school.

in its lower sense, the "we" includes the ensouled body – or the "beast" as he terms it.

Interior Range of Self

Plotinus depicts the self in a second related way – in terms of an interiority that culminates in a peak self. As Hadot notes, this deepest self is the spiritual world, which Plotinus does not view as a pristine state, irretrievably lost, to which he can be brought back only through divine grace, or as a supraterrestrial or supracosmic place from which he is separated by celestial space. Rather, it is the self at its deepest level, which can be reached immediately, by returning within oneself, a return Plotinus himself experiences and narrates in IV.8(6).1. This access to the deepest self is the "invasion" of the field of consciousness, by something, which has till now remained unconscious. This propinquity and accessibility of the deepest self and its ground in Plotinus is diametrically opposed to Gnosticism, which taught that one had to await the end of the sensible world for the purely spiritual self to return to its homeland.[34]

Such a peak self (the deepest) appears in the *Enneads* in at least three ways – at the penultimate level as the noetic self identified with its form, as the entire hypostatic structure embedded in man as his inmost self, and as the hypernoetic and hyperontic summit of the ascendant self. Armstrong maintains that the "ultimate self" in V.3(49).4, which becomes identical with its Form, is only penultimate compared to the peak of the self's self-transcendence, which is its union with the One.[35] Instead of taking the individual Forms as the inmost self, the entire hypostatic structure implanted in each of us serves as the interior summit of the authentic self.[36] Plotinus tells us in V.1(10).10–11, that the three primal hypostases "are present also in ourselves", where "ourselves" comprises that level in us, which transcends the realm of sense-perception. Thus, under the ambiance of the One, the self is engraved, not only with the genus-species structure of soul, but with the entire hypostatic structure, within which are located the lower Forms, as well as the higher universal Forms. As Schürmann and Hadot note, these levels of metaphysical reality become levels of the self and levels of the inner life and each level is to be explained with reference to its superior. Hadot points to Plotinus'

[34] Hadot, 25–6; Schürmann, 6.

[35] See A.H. Armstrong, "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus", in *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), 58.

[36] While Blumenthal, 80, in his careful study, "Did Plotinus believe in Ideas of Individuals?" concludes that Plotinus did not have consistent views on this question, Armstrong, 56, asserts in "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus", that individual Forms do exist wherever there is real "formal" difference – as there is among the higher selves of individual men, gods and *daimônes*.

central intuition – that the human self is *not* irrevocably separated from the true eternal self in God, for the latter is within us. Wald notes that it is because of the 'something' of the human soul which has not sunk – it lingers in the intellectual realm (IV.8(6).8)[37] – that the three primary principles are within the human soul. Hadot uses this same quotation to conclude that everything is within us and we are within all things and our "self" extends from God to matter, for we are up above even as we are down here on earth.[38]

Plotinus also describes the peak of the self as the ultimate summit of all generated beings – the hypernoetic and hyperontic summit, where, in imitation of the still and lifeless One, the deepest self is the entity shorn of both soul and Intellect, its former bearers (VI.7(38).35). This indicates that the overall trail of the self is more than circular – for the range of its ascent exceeds that of its descent. Its self-transcendence surpasses the noetic summit from which it originates – and carries it further towards the One. In fact, the scope of the self exceeds even the rather static ontological terrain of the two lower principles or hypostases. This is not surprising, for even the domain of the hypostasis soul surpasses that of Intellect. When soul gets an intense love for the One, it sheds intelligible shape and grows hypernoetic (VI.7(38).34). Although the scope of the self's ascent exceeds that of its descent, there is a correspondence between the interior range of its ascent and its outer existential trajectory. Through the medium of consciousness, which Hadot takes to be a point of view or center of perspective, the self's outer levels of existence are established by the foci of its inner aspirations.[39]

To elucidate this inner determination of the self's existential identity, Plotinus uses two related architectonic structures – first, the triad of stages or degrees of the self and the significance of the mean or the middle position therein and second, the dyad of the inner and the outer selves and the dialectic therein. The three levels of the self demarcate the immanent terrain of its interiority and the self ascends across this terrain through the dialectic between its inner and outer selves. Echoing Plato's *Phaedrus* (246B67), Plotinus tells us in III.4(15).2 that the hypostasis soul creates in three forms – the rational (*logikon*), perceptive (*aisthêtikon*) and the growth-form (*phytikon*). These three levels of existence also characterize man's objective existential trajectory – all three are present, but neither the better nor the inferior parts dominate. The self *qua* "we" live like beings characterized by sense-perception, for we have sense-organs. In terms of our animate corporeality, we also

[37] As Blumenthal notes, when Plotinus says that not all the soul descends, he may mean that some of it remains at the level of the hypostasis soul. It would then be a *nous* incidentally. It would not be there primarily, as would the Ideas. See H.J. Blumenthal, "*Nous* and Soul in Plotinus: Some Problems of Demarcation", in *Soul and Intellect*, 217–18.

[38] Schürmann uses this embedded hypostatic structure to reveal the metaphysical significance of "we" in the genesis of time. See Hadot, 27; Schürmann, 6–7, 47; and Wald, 158.

[39] Hadot, 29.

live like plants. Although all three levels collaborate in man and are inwardly accessible to him, the rational part is significant enough to designate the whole form as man (III.4(15).2). This indicates that it is his interiority, rather than existential composition that determines man's self. In accordance with these triadic existential levels, there are three levels within man's interiority, so that the levels at which man aims his ethical strivings to determine his self – are also triadic. Of these three, the middle is significant for historical man. The human self *qua* "man" occupies a middle position, both in the order of existence and within its interior range. Like his medial existential position – between the two extremes of gods and beasts – man in his interiority, now inclines to one and now to the other, but the majority remain in the middle (III.2(47).8).The human self *qua* soul can range from the perfection it reaches when it has Intellect, followed by its reasoning part, which operates by understanding impressions it receives from above (Intellect) and below (sense-perception),[40] down to its perceptive part which perceives only that which is external (V.1(10).10, V.3(49).2–3). Yet "we" are – not the transcendental self beyond sense-perception (V.1(10).10–11) – but the "principal part of the soul", in the middle, between the better power of Intellect and the worse power of sense-perception (V.3(49).3).

Plotinus gives two colorful, but contrasting illustrations of the dyadic self – the archetypal conjoint of the primeval noetic man and the accretive other man, on the one hand and Heracles and his shade on the other. While the former descends from a pristine disjointed state, the latter tries to ascend to a purified disjointed state. This conjoint of the truer inner self and its accretive counterpart pertains at once to man's existence – man exists as this splintered self – but also to his interiority. Man experiences this dyad inwardly in the dialectic between his inner and outer selves – a dialectic highlighted by Plotinus as the struggle away from the body, towards greater degrees of authenticity and truth. In IV.8(6).8, Plotinus gives us a general formulation of this 'double man': every soul (and thus self *qua* soul) has something of what is below, in the direction of the body and of what is above, in the direction of Intellect. The *Enneads* are replete with other variations on the theme of the 'double man' that support this general formulation.[41] In II.3(52).9, every man is double – the lower man is the ensouled body, in which the corporeal has greater power, while the remainder is the "himself". Quoting Plato, Plotinus

[40] The reasoning part of soul makes its judgment based on mental images present to it from sense-perception. It also observes imprints of things that come to it from Intellect (V.3(49).2). In the case of the "true" soul, even the former type of reasoning can be intellective. When the "true" soul reasons – by passing judgment on the impressions (*typoi*) produced by sensation – it is at the same time contemplating forms by a kind of sympathy (I.1(53).9).

[41] In VI.7(38).1–7, the sensible and the intelligible are related in a unique manner, precluding all dualism. What is seen in historical man is the realization of an intelligible essence on a lower level. See O'Daly, 59.

advocates disjointing this double. He exhorts the higher self ("we") to "fly from here" (*Theaetetus* 176A8–B1) and "separate" (*Phaedo* 67C6) "ourselves" from the accretions and not be the "composite thing". Indeed "we" can achieve this transcendence of the body for "we" are the authentic self – "we" are "that which we really are". The hallmark of this authenticity is the power given to us by nature, to master our passions. Similarly, in I.1(53).7, the true "man" and "we" begin on the level of thought, while that which comes "before", or below this – the body-soul compound and its associated sensation and emotion – is "ours". In 1.1(53).10, the "we" is used in two ways – either the lower "we", which includes the "beast" *qua* ensouled body, or the higher "we" that transcends the body even in our present life. The true man is altogether bereft of bodily affections and has the higher virtues that belong to the sphere of Intellect.[42] Finally, in V.3(49).4 Plotinus discusses a special case of the 'double man' – that of the man who knows himself. The dialectic within this double man is suffused with aspiration, perhaps because of its attendant knowledge. The "man" who knows "himself" is double on account of his two levels of knowing – the discursive, which merely seeks and the intellective, which possesses. The part which reasons discursively is second after Intellect and an image of Intellect. While the lower man knows only the reasoning which belongs to soul, the higher man knows himself more completely, according to Intellect, because he has become that Intellect. The latter intellective knowledge transports him beyond "man". As Armstrong notes, this self, which snatches itself up into the higher world, drawing up the better intellective part of soul, has presumably become identical with its individual Form or Intellect. It is "an ultimate self higher than the determinable 'we', the reasoning soul, the highest in us which can be called 'man'".[43]

These instances of the "double man" are perhaps best summarized by Gerson's analysis of the dual self. Gerson maintains that Plotinus discerns between the "endowed" and the "ideal" self. While the "endowed self" is what humans recognize from their early life, as the subject of diverse activities and states, the "ideal self" is projected, defined, and notional. Once the ideal is attained, it constitutes the alteration from the initial endowment. For Plotinus however, the ideal self is eternally real and the same in kind for everyone. It is the agent of contemplation of the Forms. While the true ideal self is the agent of its discarnate, noetic activity, the endowed self is the agent of all incarnate psychic activities – down to those of which we are unconscious (I.1(53).7 and V.3(49).3). The immediate agent of these latter activities is the "composite". Gerson notes further that the endowed self constructs an ideal from a range of potentialities. For

[42] These are superior to the virtues that result – not from thought – but from habit and training and belong to the "joint entity".

[43] And yet, as already cited, Armstrong holds this stage to be penultimate – for the self is capable of further self-transcendence. See Armstrong, "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus", 58.

Plotinus, the endowed self is never aware of the activity of the true ideal self and it lacks the self-consciousness of this activity that the ideal self possesses.[44]

The triadic and dyadic structures of the self are related, for the dialectic between the true self and the *eidôlon* is depicted not only through the dyadic structure, but also the triadic, wherein the all important middle part is like a searchlight that beams up and down to spotlight the level of the self it determines.[45] Plotinus generalizes the self's internal moral capacity to determine the ontological echelon at which it exists, by using the internally mobile "we" (*hêmeis*), portrayed as a "fluctuating spotlight of consciousness" by Dodds.[46] For Hadot and Schürmann, these fluctuations range from the unconscious life of the body to the unconscious life in the divine. By paying close attention, we are capable of perceiving the "pulsation" of the latter in the same way as we could perceive the "pulsation" of the former. Yet, the two are not equal and Hadot exhorts us towards the Divine.[47]

Our identity manifests the conjoint of our ethical and ontological strivings. "We" determine our level of existence, through our engagement in the inner dialectic – and "we" do so repeatedly, over our entire transmigratory voyage (III.4(15).2). Our identity is mobile, because it is determined by that disposition which we have "guarded" best in ourselves from among these three – the rational, the perceptive and the vegetal. This implies that our ethical strivings are rendered objective – they determine the destiny of the soul after death, in accordance with an objective moral law. This is different from I.2(19).6, where man's impulse – although unwilled or involuntary and comparable with the Socratic notion of ignorance – devolves upon his level of existence.[48] Central to this introspective determination of our self, is our middle part. This median, which Hadot identifies as consciousness, is a potent tool in this dialectic, for our "self" coincides with that point from which a perspective is opened for us, whether onto the world or our souls. A psychic activity must be conscious in order to be "ours". Consciousness is like a mirror (I.4(46).10) – all it needs is to be polished and turned in a certain direction for it to reflect the objects that appear to it.[49] Thus Plotinus suggests in I.1(53).11, that "we" actualize that which is potential in us by directing our "middle part" towards and thereby becoming conscious of the higher principles,

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[44] See Gerson, 141–3.

[45] Yet, the middle part is not always the determinant. In II.9(33).2 Plotinus defines a somewhat higher triad, with a higher middle part. One part of "our soul" is always directed to the intelligible realities, one (presumably the *eidôlon*) to the things of this world, and one lies in the middle between these two. This middle part can be dragged down by the worse part.

[46] See Blumenthal's "Plotinus' Psychology: Aristotle in the Service of Platonism", in *Soul and Intellect*, 363.

[47] Hadot, 32; Schürmann, 7.

[48] O'Daly, 22, 26.

[49] Hadot, 29–30.

their opposites, or whatever "we" are seeking to actualize from potency. Or, as O'Daly puts it, a "new aspect" of man's nature is thereby realized when the mid-point is directed to a higher or lower phase than itself.[50]

The complexities of the interior range of the self are revealed most patently in the upper stages of its ascent to the One. The self ascends by purifying itself through dialectic, virtue, beauty and self-knowledge. As the self borne by soul ascends to the One, it expands, for soul unifies with the cosmic and noetic All. That the self is ascending is evident in its transcendence of discursion, the ascent of its bearers (soul and Intellect), and its final transcendence of all bearers, when it reaches the hypernoetic level. In terms of the genus-species structure of soul, the bearer of the self ascends from the particular, descended, embodied soul, to its unity with the World Soul at the level of the genus, to the unification of the genus with the cosmic All and the noetic All, and finally to the hypernoetic summit of the soul. Accordingly, "we" ascend as well. Plotinus tells us that "we" are "put on the way" to the One by "purifications", "virtues", and "adornings", and by gaining "footholds" in the stronghold of Intellect, "settling ourselves firmly there and feasting on its contents" (VI.7(38).36) – for Intellect too is part of "ourselves" and a goal of our ascent (I.1(53).13). Nestled in Intellect, the self borne by noetic soul prepares for its preliminary, limited intellectual vision of the One, in VI.9(9).3 and VI.7(38).35–36 and soul's hypernoetic stance before the solitary One in VI.7(38).34. In III.8(30).9 the subject of the ascent is "we" (*hêmeis*) who are to receive the One by setting "our intellect" to it. Intellect must return "backwards" – that is, towards the One, opposite to the direction of its emanative outflow – and "give itself up" to the One. At the final stages of the ascent, the self surpasses even Intellect, but continues to be borne by the hypernoetic and hyperontic soul (VI.7(38).34–35). Thus, in Chapter 34, its love of the One is so empowering, that an intoxicated soul grows hypernoetic, when it breaks the strictures of the hierarchy of the hypostases and flings away even the intelligible shape that was once its prop. In Chapter 35, the self has dual bearers – Intellect and soul. The One unifies both Intellect and soul and lifts them so high that soul, the final carrier of the self grows still, in imitation of the One. Here, as already stated, Plotinus finally relinquishes even soul as the bearer of the self. The self – now utterly still and beyond life – is borne by neither soul nor Intellect. This is the only instance of the entirely unmasked self. No longer veiled by its bearers, the self is finally revealed in its most authentic and independent state, penultimate with respect to its final state of *unio* with the One.

[50] O'Daly, 48.

Conclusion

Thus there is indeed no overt, canonized concept of the self in the *Enneads* of Plotinus. Yet, concealed beneath this taxonomical silence is a notional presence so subtle, mobile and flexible that it surpasses in scope even the range of the two lower hypostases. The higher aspect of the dyadic self can be exhorted and wielded to fly from the accretions encrusting it towards the light of the One. Thus the self is anything but obdurate in its existence or interiority. It is neither encaged in body and particular soul, nor petrified within the boundaries of the objectified range of the hypostases. It can be an expression and vehicle of *epistrophic* freedom. From deep within the depths of the relative immobility of our hypostatic compound, it is through the mobile self that we lend voice to the *epistrophic* yearnings of the particular soul. But for the self, we could not escape from evils here or ascend beyond our embodied state.

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Chapter 6

The Logic of *Poiesis*

As the "productive power of all things" (III.8(30).10, V.4(7).2), Plotinus' One is the solitary and sovereign source of the formative power of making. By overflowing in superabundance, the One engenders a monistic and *poietic* procession of the generated worlds (IV.8(6).6), governed by pivotal metaphysical laws that operate at each stage by emanative decree and necessity. These motifs are reiterated in the conjoint genesis of time and the world of sense in III.7(45).11, for, despite some differences, the latter is a cameo of this procession. Thus key architectonic constituents of emanative *poiesis* – like *logos* and contemplation – must first be studied to understand how they apply to the generation of time and the cosmos in III.7(45).11. Accordingly, there are four sections in this chapter:
(1) "Emanation" and Laws of *Poiesis*, (2) Procession from the One, (3) *Logos*, and (4) Contemplation.

"Emanation" and Laws of *Poiesis*

In Plotinus' thought, the efflux cascading from the One has often been described by the commonplace term, "emanation". Armstrong traces the doctrine of emanation to the Stoics – in particular, the later Stoicism of Posidonius.[1] The basic sources of Plotinus' emanation theory are Plato's comparison of the Good with the sun and his image of the Good as the light of the intelligible world of forms.[2] However, as Sinnige suggests, it is only the zenith of Plotinian emanation – the common origin of all existence in a first principle which is perfectly One – that can be explained with reference to Plato. Other features such as – the constituents of the procession (the first duality in Intellect followed by All-Soul and its subsequent infinite multitude of living things), the dual movement characteristic of emanation (the outflow of activity and the contemplative return of progeny to their progenitors), and the reiteration of this creative mechanism all the way down to the lowest level of existence – are features specific to Plotinian emanation.[3] The point

[1] A.H. Armstrong, "'Emanation' in Plotinus", in *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), 62.

[2] J.M. Rist, *Plotinus. The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 68.

[3] Th.G. Sinnige, *Six Lectures on Plotinus and Gnosticism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 8.

in Plotinus' frequent use of the example of the generation of light by the sun to explain generation and production is, as Deck notes, twofold: (1) such an emission does not deplete the source; (2) the source is simultaneous with the emitted.[4]

In the scholarship on Plotinus, there is a tradition of opposition to the metaphoric use of "emanation" to depict the irradiation of activity and generated beings from the One. Alternative terms deemed more appropriate are, "derivation" (O'Meara), "devolution" (Deck), "effulguration" (Stoehr), and "procession" (Bréhier).[5] Scholars, like Müller, Armstrong, O'Meara and Reale have objected to the use of "emanation" because metaphors detract from rational and genuine philosophy.[6] Armstrong – for whom emanationism is a form of solar theology and emanation a "baffling and unsatisfactory metaphor" – warns that although it is clear what Plotinus wants to express through the term emanation (the "spontaneous and necessary efflux of life or power from the One, which leaves their source undiminished"), the problem lies with giving "emanation" a philosophical meaning. This metaphor does not work when applied to the One and Intellect.[7]

Yet, notwithstanding these objections, there is, as Sinnige argues, ample evidence in the *Enneads*, of an imagery of generation that is well represented by the metaphor of emanation. This is true of early treatises like IV.8(6).6, as well as treatises from Plotinus' middle period, like II.9(33).3. Moreover, against the arguments of critics who reject emanationism – on the ground that the One loses its perfection and uniqueness, because emanation implies an outflow of being from the One – Sinnige points out that Plotinus repeatedly addresses this problem, by insisting that the outflow of energy in no way reduces the perfection or completeness of the One. Thus the One, in its creative act, does not communicate *itself*. In V.2 (11).1, V.3(49).12 and V.1(10).7, what emanates is not the One itself, but its creative energy (*dunamis*) or creative light.[8] Armstrong claims that Plotinus' own powerful, but implicit critique of emanation-images in VI.4(22).7 makes it clear that for him emanation was an inadequate, though necessary metaphor.

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[4] J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 12. Citing IV.3(27).10, Deck adds that these comparisons are possible because Plotinus apparently believed that the sun is not weakened by the emission of light and that light takes no time to reach an illuminable object from a source.

[5] É. Bréhier, "The Procession", in *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. J. Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958).

[6] Before Armstrong, H.F. Müller treats emanationism as a host of metaphors and images and suggests that it be left aside to leave room for genuine philosophy. See Sinnige, 8–12.

[7] A.H. Armstrong, "NOYΣ as Emanation", in *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 52, 56–7. Although Armstrong discovers "solar theology" in the works of Plotinus, he asserts that he does not wish to suggest that Plotinus was a "solar theologian" or sun-worshipper.

[8] Sinnige, 8–11. However, we have to be careful not to assume any otherness between the One and its light.

Plotinus questions the imagery of emanation and points out that once the materialist element (the actual physical center from which emanation occurs) is eliminated from the metaphor of emanation, what remains is an immanent omnipresence of the spiritual. Thus – Armstrong argues – the idea of emanation gets destroyed.[9] In VI.4(22).12 Plotinus presents a similar analogy in sonic terms. Yet, as Fielder remonstrates, Armstrong's claim is true only if we continue to see radiation in spatial terms. Plotinus replaces the tenet of light radiating from one spatial location to a different set of spatial locations, by the notion that one kind of reality gives its power to another different kind of reality. What remains after the material source is eliminated is the power to illuminate.[10] In this work, "emanation" is used interchangeably with "procession", qualified by Rist's warning that the limited metaphorical language of "emanation" can never give us a full grasp of the nature of the One.[11]

Armstrong clarifies that the formative power of the One – described for its instrumentality as the "power which generates the real beings" (VI.9(9).5) and for its potency as a "power unspeakably great" (IV.8(6).6) – is not "potentiality" in the Aristotelian sense. It is not passive but supremely active. It is not a formlessness which submits to forms, but one that is productive of forms. Thus the One is the beginning of all things – but not a spermatic beginning.[12] This power *from* the One should be discerned from the power *in* the One, for as Bussanich notes, it is misleading to describe the two as the same – the One *qua* "productive power of all things" is not the One itself.[13] Bestowed by divine generosity, this power (*dunamis*) impels the process of making and emanation to the ultimate limit – it sends out generated things and cannot leave anything without a share of itself (IV.8(6).6). It comes to generated beings when they abide above (IV.3(27).6). Plotinus illustrates the inexhaustible and unperturbed nature of the One's everlasting generation, by using examples of emanation from the world of sense. Like the source-less spring which gives its entirety to rivers, the life in the root, which flows through the plant without affecting its origin in the root (III.8(30).10), or the sun which irradiates bright light, but remains unchanged (V.1(10).6), the One is the irreducible source, which generates everlastingly by its quiet presence

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[9] *Plotinus Ennead VI*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 271. Also see Armstrong's "NOYΣ as Emanation", in *Architecture of the Intelligible Universe*, 58–60.

[10] J.H. Fielder, "*Chorismos* and Emanation in the Philosophy of Plotinus", in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, R.B. Harris (ed.) (Albany: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), 108.

[11] Rist, 71.

[12] See *Plotinus Ennead III*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 394–5, note 1. Also see Armstrong's "NOYΣ as Emanation", in *Architecture of the Intelligible Universe*, 62–3.

[13] J. Bussanich, *The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 177.

(V.3(49).12) but remains "undiminished", unaffected, and distinct from its progeny (VI.9(9).5).

In the *Enneads*, making itself is governed by three related metaphysical laws: (1) all things produce when they come to perfection (V.1(10).6 and V.4(7).1); (2) making happens by the outflow of the second activity (*energeia*) from the progenitor (V.4(7).2); and (3) making occurs in two steps – first, the overflow of the perfected prior generates a progeny, but one that is "shapeless"– then this turns around and receives form by returning in contemplation to its parent (III.4(15).1). The first law illustrates the necessity with which making takes place.[14] That it is *perfection* that causes the progenitor to overflow and make and that this principle applies to *all* things, imply that the perfected thing does not will or plan its making, but rather cannot help but make – it does not *endure* to remain by itself. Moreover, this law applies – not only to things which have choice – but to things which grow and produce without choosing to and even lifeless things (V.4(7).1). Examples of this that have inspired the metaphor "emanation", are the fire that warms, the snow that cools and the drugs that act on something else, in imitation of the One, each to its own capacity by tending to everlastingness and generosity (V.4(7).1). Again in V.1(10).6, fire, snow and perfume diffuse something of themselves to their surroundings. In V.4(7).1, Plotinus' point is that if entities as menial as lifeless things and things incapable of choice produce when perfect – and do so in imitation of the supreme exemplar, the One – how can the ever perfect One refrain from overflowing in superabundance, as if it were powerless, or begrudged itself? Like the divine in Plato's *Phaedrus* (247A7) and *Timaeus* (29E1–2), characterized by the absence of any selfish, grudging wish to keep one's good to oneself – Plotinus' One generates continually, unstintedly and everlastingly. Thus this first law is exemplified *par excellence* by the One. Even though it transcends external necessity and is in no way subject to it, the One cannot help but produce, or, as Deck notes, it produces *simpliciter*. Yet, Deck also points out that its overflowing is a mere *quasi* overflowing – it overflows *as it were*, or *so to speak* (V.3(49).12) – because it in itself remains unaffected and perfect.[15]

As the supreme exemplar also of the second metaphysical principle, the One makes by irradiating its second activity, which Plotinus compares to a shaft of light from the sun (V.3(49).12). Reversing the photolytic process, yet described in photological terms, this activity makes an array of progeny – from the incorporeal divine principles, or *archai*, down to matter, nature, time, and the ensemble of ensouled bodies that constitute the cosmos.[16] In V.4(7).2, Plotinus tells us that each

[14] For whether the One makes Intellect with necessity see Rist, "Emanation and Necessity", in *Road to Reality*.

[15] Deck, 13.

[16] As Gerson notes, this activity from the One is neither Intellect alone, nor just that which Intellect receives from the One. It is rather, the being of everything that can possess being – from Intellect down to, and including matter. See L.P. Gerson,

thing has a dual activity – the primary, which belongs to substance and is generated from the perfection in it and the secondary, which goes out from substance.[17] In Plotinus' analogy with fire, the heat *of* the fire or substantial heat represents the first activity, while the heat irradiating *from* the fire – when fire exercises its first activity in abiding unchanged as fire – represents the second generative activity. The two activities are not equivalent. The first, more intrinsic activity is the active actuality which *is* each particular thing, whereas the second activity – distinct from the first, its image (V.1(10).6), and necessary when the first exercises itself[18] – "must in everything be a consequence of it, different from the thing itself" (V.4(7).2). Unlike generated things, the One admits of no otherness.[19] Thus, it is with the exception of the One that all progenitors have, so to speak, a division of labor between their two distinct activities. While its first substantial activity contemplates the prior of the progenitor and thereby sustains its being, fetches its form, and renders itself perfect – making occurs by its second activity, which is produced with necessity from the primary, as its image and emanates outward with necessity.

The third law is exemplified in particular by Intellect and soul, which are amorphous when nascent, but shed all nebulosity and derive form when they return in recrudescent contemplation to their respective priors. It is noteworthy that – unlike the absolute indefiniteness of matter – the incipient "shapelessness" of these progeny is only relative and not absolute. With the exception of matter, all such neophytes are "indefinite" only relative to the perfection that comes with form. Thus they are indefinite *within* form and such indefiniteness is terminable by contemplating the prior and receiving form. This third law is reiterated all the way down to the level of matter, which receives the form appropriate to its potentiality and is perfected into body. This is where the procession stops. As Plotinus puts it, this form in body is the "last representative of the powers above in the last depth of the world below" (III.4(15).1). However, there is a difference in how this third law applies at the level of matter. Unlike Intellect and soul, which derive their forms by contemplating their priors, matter cannot contemplate its priors in order to be converted to body, for a deadness comes with its absolute indefiniteness. In any case, there is, so to speak, no further need for such contemplation, for the consequence of this deadness is the cessation in the procession and the absence of any further generation.

"Plotinus's Metaphysics: Emanation or Creation?" *Review of Metaphysics* 46 (March 1993): 570.

[17] As Gerson, 566–7, notes, Plotinus' distinction between these two activities illustrates better than any other doctrine, his original use of his Platonic and Aristotelian sources. The word *energeia* is apparently of Aristotelian origin, although the use to which Plotinus puts this concept, especially with respect to the One, is most un-Aristotelian. When he makes this distinction between the two activities, Plotinus may be quite consciously diverging from Aristotle's use of the concept of *energeia*.

[18] Deck, 14.

[19] There is no distinction within the One between what it is and that it is, or between its essence and existence (VI.8(39).12). See Gerson, 570–571.

Procession from the One

The procession from the One is a hierarchical, logical, regressively iconic, iterative and successively generative sequence of appearances wherein each progeny, once defined by its form, turns into a progenitor repeats the *poietic* process and inadvertently propagates its image further.[20] Each level is ontologically lower than its prior, separated by a wedge of otherness that derives from the hierarchical and iconic otherness between the primary and secondary activities in the progenitor. At each stage the image is metaphysically distinct from and inferior to its archetype, yet similar to the latter and ontologically dependent on it for its existence.[21] The pivotal motifs of *poiesis*, characterized by the three laws, are – with some qualifications – reiterated and imitated at each stage of emanation. While Intellect and soul are real beings and the procession in its entirety is eternal, time and the world of sense comprise the realm of process and sensible objects are subject to becoming and time. This outward and downward procession (*próodos*) is counterbalanced by the ascent of being towards the One (*epistrophé*), which, as Torchia notes, begins with matter's *tolmatic* surge upwards in III.6(26).14.[22] Although the procession from the One seems like a regressive downward trickling of life, being and thought, Plotinus' system is, as Armstrong notes, teleological rather than evolutionary and the direction of the universal forces is upwards and inwards, not downwards and outwards.

Plotinus characterizes the making of real beings and the realm of becoming by Intellect, soul and nature as *poiesis* – rather than its inferior, *praxis* – for they produce by contemplating their priors or themselves. Such making is, as Schroeder points out, a begetting, rather than craftsmanship. Each reality *begets* from itself that which is below it. Thus in V.8(31).12, Plotinus' point is that this All is a *natural* image of the intelligible universe and not the product of art or craft.[23]

As Deck notes, the highest instance of *poiesis* in Plotinus' world is, what can be called, the One's *autopoiesis*. The One produces itself insofar as it and its willing of itself, are one (VI.8(39).7, 13). The second highest is the One's production of Intellect. So far, *poiesis* transcends knowledge. Plotinus identifies *poiesis* with contemplation (*theoria*) only at the level of Intellect and below. Such productivity is unplanned, inadvertent, for the most part effortless, and devoid of any movement of the progenitor towards the progeny. In contradistinction with *poiesis*, *praxis* involves deliberation, effort, and even physical instruments. *Praxis*

[20] For an assessment of whether Plotinus' account of metaphysical causality is *per accidens* or *per se*, see Gerson, 562–70.

[21] Fielder, 103–5.

[22] N.J. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Being* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 84.

[23] See F.M. Schroeder, *Form and Transformation: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 40–42.

is inferior to *poiesis* because it does not derive from intellectual vision, or a prior contemplation of true realities. Yet, the urge for *praxis* remains contemplative, for it is an indistinct nisus towards contemplation.

In his depiction of the procession from the One, Plotinus reconciles two related tensions characteristic of emanation: (1) that between freedom and necessity and (2) that between forethought, reasoning, or planning – and chance or accident. That making is inadvertent, unplanned, and occurs by necessity proves the potency of the power derived from the One. In fact, Plotinus defines Intellect's generative power – which it derives from the One (VI.7(38).15) – as the power to produce something else, *without* seeking to produce it. Intellect – which has "all power" – uses this power to make the universe in "unperturbed quietness" (III.2(47).2). As Deck notes, even though Intellect is not primarily or solely a productive power, it produces with a necessity inherent in it. Yet, Intellect is no automaton, for the production of an automaton would be non-intelligent. In fact, Intellect is aware of its power. It has a "kind of intimate perception of its power, that it has power to produce substantial reality" (V.1(10).7). Producing by Intellect is at once intelligent and necessary.[24] Intellect and necessity come together to this world, but while necessity drags it towards unreason, Plotinus claims, citing Plato's *Timaeus* (48A2) "intellect controls necessity" (III.2(47).2).

Equally, whatever comes into contact with soul is made – not by "planning and consideration", indicative of discursive reason – but in accordance with the essential nature or substance of soul (IV.3(27).10). For it isn't as if the maker of this All arranged all "his" progeny in his mind and then proceeded to work. This world order is not the result of a series of "logical consequences and purposive thought" – it precedes consequential and purposive thinking (V.8(31).7). Yet the being and structure of this All do not derive from chance and accident either (III.2(47).1). Moreover, an element of volition or freedom creeps in with the *tolmatic* eruptions of volition that punctuate the procession from the One. Thus, alongside the overflow of activity from the One, there is the "audacious" urge in Intellect towards otherness with respect to the One (V.1(10).7, VI.9(9).5, III.8(30).8, and V.8(31).13). Likewise, alongside the *poietic* overflow from Intellect, there is in individual souls "audacity and coming to birth and the first otherness and the wishing to belong to themselves" (V.1(10).1) and in the hypostasis soul, a *tolmatic* "restlessly active nature" that leads to the desire for autonomy from Intellect and the subsequent generation of time and the universe (III.7(45).11).

All three metaphysical laws are exemplified in the making of Intellect and soul. In V.1(10).7, V.2(11).1, III.8(30).8, VI.7(38).15–16 and V.3(49).11–12, Plotinus expresses, in irradiational terms, the One's making of Intellect, as the by-product of the One's willing itself – Intellect is never directly willed by the One

[24] Deck, 12, 23–4, 99–100.

(V.3(49).12).[25] In fact, Intellect is sort of prefigured in the One, or, as Torchia notes, Intellect existed in a "seminal" condition even prior to its exteriorized procession.[26] In VI.8(39).18, Intellect bears witness to "something like Intellect" in the One which is not Intellect.[27] The supremely perfect One produces "everlastingly", when it overflows in "superabundance" (V.2(11).1) in the form of its second activity, which is the image of its first activity and thus, image of the One. This irradiating and iconic activity, "like a light from the sun", (V.3(49).12) is an inchoate Intellect, which receives form, only when it has an "immediate apprehension" of the One with its pre-intellectual vision. The amorphousness of this "desire and unformed sight" (V.3(49).11) is revealed perhaps in the muted nature of this pre-intellectual vision. In its sheer incapacity to hold the power of the One, the embryonic Intellect contemplates the One – not as the One, for the One transcends the duality inherent in contemplation – but as *it* apprehends the One. Like a prism, Intellect breaks up the power of the One and makes this one power many, so that it might bear it part by part – as the many.[28] This "seeing" is muted for Intellect never does see the Good as the Good, but lives towards it, depends on it, and turns towards it (VI.7(38).15–16). All that Intellect attains is a multiple image of the One, which is Intellect itself.[29] It is through this pluralized contemplation, that it receives its form as Intellect, descends, and becomes a one-many.

Yet Intellect is no passive recipient – there is a tension between its volition and the role of the One. Plotinus suggests in V.1(10).7, that Intellect *by its own means* "even defines its being for itself by the power which comes from the One". Torchia detects noetic *tolma* in the maintenance of ontological separation of Intellect from the One, for which, its "natural gravitation" must be held in check. Intellect is never "subsumed" by the One, but remains "near" enough to receive the full import of its "forming power".[30]

Alluding to Plato's analogy of the sun in *Republic* (509B2–8), Plotinus tells us that the One is the cause – not only of substance – but of its being seen (V.2(11).1, VI.7(38).16). The activity which flows out of the One is the "outshining" that the One does not thrust away from "himself", for it is not cut off from him – and yet, it is not the same as the One (V.3(49).12). As Intellect, it is the image of the One. Yet, image and original are almost organically and vitally related through a link

[25] See Rist, 67, 83.

[26] Torchia, 47.

[27] See Schroeder, 107.

[28] Torchia, 45, compares the *dyadic* Intellect to a filter through which the One's boundless power becomes variegated.

[29] Armstrong, "On the Knowing Hypostases: Synopsis", in *Plotinus Ennead V*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 70–71.

[30] Torchia, 46. In VI.9(9).5, this nearness after the One prevents Intellect from "dividing itself", or gathering further multiplicity. This passage is discussed more fully in Chapter 11.

that is like a conduit – it is because Intellect's substance is "a kind of single part of what belongs to the One and comes from the One", that "it is strengthened by the One and made perfect in substantial existence by and from it" (V.1(10).7). The One, which in its perfection could not endure to remain in itself and had to overflow, now *remains* "continually turned towards itself", as it generates Intellect, for unlike its progeny, the One has no end to move towards (V.1(10).6). This second self-containment – strictly different from the first, with its connotations of "selfish jealousy", which Plotinus rejects for the One (IV.8(6).6) – is perhaps the One's "simple concentration of attention on itself" in VI.7(38).39.

That Intellect is an image of the One is demonstrated in its manner of generation. It overflows in perfection, exactly as the One did (V.1(10).7), with a superabundance indicating absence of want. Intellect does not *evolve* into perfection before overflowing. It is perfected inasmuch as it receives form. In III.4(15).1 Plotinus tells us that the incipient "shapeless" progeny, which is formed by turning in contemplation to its progenitor, is, so to speak, "reared to maturity" by this and in VI.7(38)16, Intellect is perfected even as it is "filled". Thus in contemplating the One to receive its form, Intellect attains – not only its form – but also the fullness of fecundity and power. The form it receives and its consequent *logos* themselves represent the fecundity delivered by the down-flow of secondary activity from the One. In V.2(11).1, resembling the One, Intellect pours forth, as a "likeness" of itself, its secondary activity, or a "multiple power" that comprises the hypostasis soul, its lesser image (V.1(10).7). Copying the One, Intellect too abides unchanged as it brings forth soul. Intellect's radiating secondary activity springs from its primary activity of contemplation, or substance. Such vertical contemplations are not premeditated to fetch the fecundity and power needed to propagate further levels of the procession – that would infuse planning and degrade *poiesis* to *praxis*. Always inadvertent, their results include – not only the vertical bestowal of forms – but thereby, also the generative power to propagate further contemplation. In receiving their forms when they contemplate their priors, real beings cannot help but receive the *logoi* – which represent fecundity and the power to generate – for they are filled with contemplation. These are, so to speak, the by-products of contemplation – they are not directly sought.

The hypostasis soul is an "expression" and "kind of activity" of Intellect (V.1(10).6), just as Intellect is of the One. Imitating Intellect, this nascent soul is nebulous – as a "ghost" of Intellect, its expression is "obscure" and it is indeterminate, but naturally adapted to intellection (III.9(13).5). In order to be defined as soul, "it has to look to" or contemplate Intellect, just as the embryonic Intellect had to contemplate the One to receive its form (V.1(10).6). Once defined by Intellect, soul is a rational form (*logos*), an existing being, which thinks discursively (V.1(10).7), and perfected enough to overflow in superabundance and generate the species souls and nature. In IV.3(27).2 and III.9(13).1 Plotinus merely tells us that soul-genus *makes* the species souls. He does not delineate this process. All he says in II.1(40).5 is that the "heavenly soul (and our souls too) comes next

in order after the maker of the universe". We can only surmise – as O'Meara suggests[31] – that this making *resembles* (but is not identical to) the *poiesis* of Intellect from the One and soul from Intellect. Even though Plotinus suggests in VI.7(38).23 that "souls"[32] are derived straight from Intellect, seemingly without any mediation of the hypostasis soul, the *poiesis* of species souls from the genus might be as follows. The hypostasis soul or soul-genus contemplates Intellect to receive its form and perfection. Out of this fullness it generates as its iconic secondary activity, the amorphous species souls, which receive the indwelling genus as their singular, common form – by contemplating this genus. The World Soul is thus *eternally* formed – it is always rapt in contemplation and filled with light. Similarly, the higher part of "our soul" always lingers in the intelligible, ceaselessly receiving form (IV.8(6).8).

In its generation of nature, matter, time and the world of sense, the hypostasis soul departs from the paradigm of *poiesis* set by the One and Intellect, in that it does not abide unchanged when it generates. As it brings forth its image, soul *stirs* and loses power. This recalcitrant movement is not the motion incurred inherently by soul's activities, for a movement by soul is distinct from the motion of its activities. Soul could remain still in the face of its flowing activities. After all, the One and Intellect abide unchanged, notwithstanding their mobile activities. What makes soul's movement refractory is its extrusive disposition. In III.2(47).1, Plotinus identifies restless activity as the cause of such movements – activity that violently *extrudes* makers out of themselves. Plotinus distinguishes between two types of making and tells us that a maker incurs such a disquieting movement when it engages in the inferior form of making. Being able to make something by oneself indicates a disturbed state in the maker. In making, such a maker extrudes out of itself as it declines in the direction in which it is subordinate. This is inferior to making by "altogether blessed beings" – like members of the true All – which are devoid of such a restless or busy (*polupragmatic*) nature.[33] The latter stay still and abide in themselves as they make. Thus the true All is blessed such that in not making it accomplishes great works and in remaining in itself it makes "no small things" (III.2(47).1). Again in IV.3 (27).6, it is a mark of greater power for a maker to not be affected in what it makes. *Ennead III* has examples of the inferior form of making that disrupts rest (*stasis*) and entails decline. In III.9(13).3 a partial soul weakens insubstantially as it generates matter. "As if walking on emptiness", it becomes "more indefinite". Later, in III.7(45).11 the hypostasis soul undergoes

[31] D.J. O'Meara, "Gnosticism and the Making of the World in Plotinus", in *The Structure of Being and the Search for the Good* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 1998), 369.

[32] These must be species souls even though Blumenthal notes that "souls" here may or may not include the World Soul. See H.J. Blumenthal, "*Nous* and Soul in Plotinus: Some Problems of Demarcation", in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 215.

[33] Torchia, 76, coins the term "*polupragmatic*".

polupragmatic restlessness as it makes and the World Soul extends itself to a weaker extension as it makes the world of sense.

Logos

In the *Enneads* Plotinus recasts the Stoic doctrine of "spermatic *logos*" by conceptualizing it as an immaterial principle,[34] constituting the intellectuality present in Intellect and everything below Intellect. As Deck notes, *logos* is the diversifying aspect of intellectuality, but also the intellectuality in the devolving process of diversification.[35] In Plotinus' thought, *logos* itself is not a hypostasis,[36] but an aspect of Intellect, soul and nature. As Schürmann notes, *logos* expresses the way in which each hypostasis is ordered *by* and *towards* the hypostasis that is prior to it.[37] Intellect is represented in the visible world by the *logos*.[38] The *logoi* in soul are the immediate expressions of the forms in Intellect.[39] As active productive principles, the *logoi* are a bridge between the intelligible and the sensible, as also the means of ascent. They enable Plotinus to render the forms as at once transcendent and immanent. The "Form indwelling in matter", giving form and shape, is an inherent, living *logos* which acts as a direct and efficient cause.[40]

Inasmuch as the activities in each thing are dual – one upwards and one downwards – *logos* too is dual. In III.3(48).4, Plotinus tells us that the *logos* which descends from higher soul to the visible world is twofold – one *logos* is creative and another connects the better principles with the things which have come into

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[34] See K. Corrigan, "Essence and existence in the *Enneads*", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 111. As Corrigan explains, *logos* is immaterial insofar as it is not composed of qualities and matter. *Logos* does not inhere in matter as a quality does in a substratum, but is directly what it is – i.e. substance or soul.

[35] Deck, 62–3.

[36] See Rist, 86 and Deck, 56 for their contention against Armstrong that *logos* is *not* a separate hypostasis. In *Plotinus Ennead III*, 38–9, Armstrong argues that although the *logos* of the whole universe in III.2(47)–3(48) looks at first like a distinct hypostasis, Bréhier is right in comprehending *logos* here – not as a distinct hypostasis – but as a way of speaking of the living formative and directive pattern derived from Intellect through soul, to keep the material universe in the best possible order.

[37] R. Schürmann, "The Philosophy of Plotinus. Doctor Reiner Schürmann's Course Lectures", inventory established by Pierre Adler (New York: The New School for Social Research, Department of Philosophy, 1994, photocopied), 59.

[38] Rist, 96.

[39] Armstrong, *Plotinus Ennead III*, 371, note 1.

[40] See G. Wald, *Self-Intellection and Identity in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990), 82–3. As Wald notes, the merging of *logos* with the forms has been prepared for by the Stoics.

being. As Rist points out, while the first creative aspect (*logos poietikos*) derives ultimately from intellect, the second, which is connected to the first, is an *epistrophic* force linking inferiors to superiors and returning emanated products to their source, thus fetching them their forms. There is a second way in which the *logoi* are twofold. Rist notes that in I.2(19).3 and V.1(10).3 Plotinus also uses the doctrine of the two *logoi* – the "uttered word" or the thought expressed, versus the thought in the mind which can be "the word in the soul" or Intellect – that Philo distinguished, following the Stoics, albeit in a different way. For Plotinus, while uttered speech is the less unified imitation (*mimêma*) or image (*eikôn*) of the word in the soul, this latter is not merely the less unified imitation or image of the word in Intellect, but also its interpreter.[41]

In the *Enneads*, making occurs among real beings and the realm of becoming by the deployment and proliferation of *logos* down the hypostases as diluted actuality and the apportionment of the *logoi* among particular souls.[42] *Logos* is that outflow of the higher soul and Intellect, which is concerned with both the creation of the visible world and its administration. It "conveys" the forms into the particulars which it creates, giving them order and being.[43] *Logos*, which functions by a contemplation superior to reason, is neither action nor doing (*praxis*) but a creative activity which makes the individual *logoi*. In turn, these remain unmoved and make by bestowing different qualities in different physical things.[44] The fecundity needed for making amounts to being filled with the *logoi*, for the *logoi* themselves are fecund. Thus in III.5(50).9, *logos* in the intelligible world and in Intellect is Plenty, the father of love. Earlier in III.6(26).19, Plotinus uses what is originally a Stoic allegorical interpretation of the ithyphallic Hermes to symbolize the generative power of the *logos*.[45] The *logoi* all together are Plenty, whose plenitude is demonstrated in his being drunk with the nectar of the higher world. Also, as Fielder notes, the *logoi* are the powers immanent in sensible reality. The *logoi* in soul are indwelling powers which enter the sensible world and account for the qualities that sensibles demonstrate.[46] In VI.2(43).5 Plotinus delineates the relationship between soul's activities and the *logoi*. The substance of soul derived by its first activity is the potentiality of the *logoi*. The *logoi* themselves are soul's

[41] Rist, 96–7. For more on the difference between Philo and Plotinus on this twofold *logoi* see Rist, 100–101.

[42] Yet, as Emilsson notes, Plotinus often speaks of the *logoi* as performing most of the same functions as those ascribed to nature, or vegetative soul. Thus it is not clear whether or not some distinction should be maintained between the two. In fact, in V.9(5).6, Plotinus asserts the identity of nature and the *logoi*. See E.K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Sense-Perception: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 24 and 154, note 6.

[43] Rist, 94, 96.

[44] Corrigan, 110.

[45] See Armstrong's comment in *Plotinus Ennead III*, 288–9, note 1.

[46] Fielder, 109.

activity when soul is active according to its substance and emanates its secondary creative activity. The latter is a stream of *logoi* as it flows out to generate.

Intellect and soul are each a *logos* – and a sum of *logoi*. The one *logos* of Intellect contains the many *logoi* as real beings. Intellect itself remaining immobile and at rest, eternally bequeaths its *logos* – or "something of itself" – towards matter. This *logos* flows forward as a vehicle of intellectuality, bringing about the presence of Intellect in its inferiors (III.2(47).2).[47] Thus while Intellect rests in a "static activity", soul moves towards Intellect and around it and derives its intellective capacity from the *logos* flowing to it from Intellect (II.9(33).1). *Logos* grows "obscure" and the interrelationship of the *logoi* is looser at the level of soul, for soul is only an image of Intellect. Intellect befits soul for its generative activity by filling it with the *logoi* (III.5(50).9). Soul has all the *logoi* of the universe – of shapes of body, of gods, and everything – accordingly, the universe, too has everything (IV.3(27).10). Just as the hypostasis soul is a *logos* and a sum of *logoi*, so is the World Soul a universal *logos* and a sum of the *logoi*, all of which are pre-temporally "present at once" (IV.4(28).16). Other individual particular species souls retain this motif, for each soul is both a *logos* and a sum of the *logoi*. In V.7(18).1 Plotinus makes the claim that "each soul possesses all the forming principles in the universe". This is not astonishing for all species souls are consubstantial. Soul-genus may perhaps be described as the seat of *logos*. We can infer that just as Intellect bequeaths the *logoi* to the hypostasis soul, this genus, in its turn supplies its species with the *logoi*, which diminish in their powers as they trickle down to lower levels.

As Corrigan notes, in III.8(30).2, the *logos*, or formative principle is a real, *objective* entity at work in nature.[48] Here in the realm of process, making occurs when soul, which contains the *logoi* of all things in the sensible world, bequeaths these to matter, thereby producing bodies. Matter is not a real substrate for Plotinus, but the darkening of soul's illumination as it descends (I.8(51).14).[49] Like the flow of *logos* from Intellect to its inferiors, a *logos* or "formative principle" flowing from soul – not entitatively, but as an aspect of soul – comes to matter and makes body (IV.7(2).2). As the *logoi* order, adorn and unify matter, matter is *made* into bodies, yet left in the impassible state of non-being. Thus, a body is "matter and an indwelling *logos*" (Corrigan) (II.7(37).3) and the visible universe is "the encounter of *logos* with matter" (Deck).[50] Just as the *logos* in a seed is unified and harmonious, but unfolds in the sphere of bulk as something dispersed and disharmonious, so also

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[47] See Deck, 56–7. As Deck clarifies, here, Intellect itself does not flow forth as *logos*. But neither do the *logoi* within Intellect flow forth. Intellect remains immobile and at rest and *logos* flows forth and brings about the presence of Intellect in all things. See Deck, 57.

[48] Corrigan, 110.

[49] See M.F. Wagner, "The Scientific Spirit", in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, M.F. Wagner (ed.) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 327, note 45.

[50] See Corrigan, 111 and Deck, 59.

from the unity in Intellect and its out flowing *logos*, this All arises in the sphere of bulk as a dispersed and disharmonious All. Yet the *logos* orchestrates a melody out of the contentious sounds of this All (III.2(47).2). Deck points out that *logos*, or reason, which is composed of the same and the other, produces maximum contrariety (III.2(47).16) – an otherness that is resolved and at peace in Intellect and soul, but expressed in the sensible All as strife – or "a development with collisions and mutual impedances". Yet this strife of the pairs of opposites is not absolute, for even these opposites "co-operate" for the perfection of the universe and contribute to universal order (II.3(52).16). The *logos* of the universe, which is neither pure Intellect nor pure soul, but generated by both as "a sort of outshining" of themselves – perhaps in imitation of the outshining that comprises the activity flowing out of the One in V.3(49).12 – generates and maintains this disharmony, which Deck describes as the "war of the *logoi*" (III.2(47).16).[51]

Contemplation

In Plotinus' thought contemplation (*theoria*) serves – not merely the purposes of spiritual ascent or sustenance of the life and being of the contemplator – but also a generative purpose. Its *inadvertent* results are creative in the special sense of making (*poiesis*) and not action (*praxis*), when the product or work of contemplation (the progeny) is posterior to the object of contemplation. Without contemplation, the levels below Intellect could not be generated. *Poiesis* is a result of contemplation or a conjunction of both contemplation and production and as Deck notes, such contemplative producing is a "synthesizing principle".[52] Contemplative knowers, who gain firm possession of true beings by knowledge, are automatically *poietic*. In III.8(30).1, 4–7, Plotinus delineates the association of *poiesis*, *praxis* and activity (*energeia*) with contemplation (*theoria*). *Poiesis* derives from contemplation and *praxis* is for the sake of contemplation and vision, its goal is knowledge, and its driving-force is desire for knowledge (Chapters 6–7). However both *poiesis* and *praxis* can be a weakening, if they are not a consequence of contemplation – a weakening, if the "maker" or "doer" had nothing in view beyond the thing done and a consequence if his object of contemplation were better than his product of contemplation ("what he made") (Chapter 4).[53] *Praxis* which issues from contemplation is superior to the weakening *praxis* that is a substitute for contemplation (Chapter 4). Plotinus also discerns between compulsory or necessary *praxis*, which externalizes or drags contemplation more towards the outer world and voluntary *praxis*, which does this less, but nonetheless springs

[51] Deck, 58.

[52] *Ibid*., 117.

[53] See Deck, 27 for the two meanings of *theorema*: (1) object of contemplation and (2) work of contemplation.

from the desire for contemplation (Chapter 1). Plotinus tells us that all activity (*energeia*) of soul must be contemplation, but one stage weaker than another (Chapter 5).[54] When living things produce, it is the *logoi* within that stir them and this is an activity of contemplation (Chapter 7).

The emanative efflux from the One is, so to speak, a causative-generative sequence of contemplations and contemplators – a "one-track process" as Merlan notes – reaching all the way to the world of sense.[55] There is, as O'Meara points out, a "continuous contemplative progression from the One, each contemplation being the image consequent on a higher contemplation. The sensible world is constituted as a product consequent on the last contemplative being, Nature."[56] This sequence is reverted in the ascending recrudescent contemplations, characteristic of *epistrophic* conversion and attained by the individual human self in its spiritual ascent through the hypostases. Yet contemplation in the two sequences is not symmetrical. In the emanative sequence, it is inadvertently procreative and formative in an existential sense, whereas in the ascent, contemplation is expansive and unitive – it is procreative only insofar as it generates the higher, unitive states of the self until the level of the hypernoetic self in VI.7(38).35.[57] While emanative contemplation bequeaths forms existentially, contemplation for the purpose of ascent causes the ascending soul to return by unifying with the eternal noetic forms (I.6(1).9).

Poiesis amounts to a configuration of contemplation, its concomitant knowledge, the down-flow of activity and *logoi*, and the bestowal of forms. At the ultimate level of the world of the sense, this configuration ends with the intangible encounter of forms with matter leading to the appearance of the ensouled bodies of the universe. The inadvertent results of *poiesis* include – not only the appearance of progeny – but also their derivation of forms. *Poietic* contemplation among real beings is somewhat different from that in the realm of process – in its purpose and object of contemplation. Among real beings, the production of a progeny is, as Armstrong puts it, the "necessary, unconscious reflex" of the progenitor's primary activity of contemplation of its prior.[58] Until this contemplation occurs the progenitor itself is a neophyte progeny bereft of form. Its primary activity fetches the form of the progenitor, belongs to its substance, and perfects it such that its

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[54] Deck points out that in III.8(30).5 we cannot be sure of which soul Plotinus is speaking – the World Soul or the individual human soul. See Deck, 50–51.

[55] P. Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), 115.

[56] O'Meara, 374.

[57] For the ascent, the unity in question is that between contemplations and contemplators. As contemplation itself ascends – from nature to soul to Intellect – contemplations become more intimate and united with contemplators (III.8(30).8). At the level of the aspiring seeker, the unity in question is that between its self and the priors it contemplates and unifies with as it sheds its erstwhile bearers.

[58] Armstrong, *Architecture of the Intelligible Universe*, 111.

second activity overflows and declines to engage in a partial *poiesis* – all it generates is a neophyte offspring, but not its form. The onus is now on this second progeny to derive its own form by contemplating its prior. The progeny must, so to speak, cooperate with its progenitor for the delineation of its entirety – existence and form.

This is no longer true at levels below real beings, where contemplation is infeasible, so that progeny cannot derive form by contemplating their priors. When Plotinus reminds us of the third metaphysical law – that the progeny must return in contemplation to its progenitor to derive form – he sounds as if it applies even at this base level of soul's production of matter:

> Just as everything which was produced before this was produced shapeless, but was formed by turning towards its producer and being, so to speak, reared to maturity by it, so here, too, that which is produced is not any more a form of soul – for it is not alive – but absolute indefiniteness … When it is perfected it becomes a body, receiving the form appropriate to its potentiality, a receiver for the principle which produced it and brought it to maturity. (III.4(15).1)

Lacking the wherewithal with which to contemplate soul, matter has to be passive in receiving the form appropriate to its potentiality.[59] In III.6(26).14, "rapacious" matter's futile "violent attempt to grasp" at the images of forms, is perhaps the closest matter comes to a distorted *tolmatic* type of contemplation – but even this is not for the purpose of receiving "what the giver has" – namely form. Similarly, nature does not contemplate soul to derive its form, except insofar as nature's self-contemplation is perhaps its "vestigial" contemplation of soul.[60] Time and the world of sense do not turn to soul in contemplation to derive their forms. Through their unfolding aspiration for becoming they accrue images of their archetypes. Moreover, the incipient sensible objects and time are not "shapeless" – in fact, time has a fore-life (III.7(45).11). Although Plotinus claims paradoxically, in III.8(30).1 that all activities of the natural cosmos – rational and irrational – are serious efforts at contemplation and sustain themselves by a contemplation of priors,[61] sensible objects do not derive their incipient forms by contemplating their priors. Perhaps it is because they are fainter images – unlike images in the domain of real beings, like Intellect and soul – that the onus no longer lies with matter, nature, the sensible progeny or time to derive their own existential forms by contemplating their progenitors. Even if they had the wherewithal to contemplate, the objects of contemplation for time and the world of sense would not be their noetic archetypes

[59] Thus Carroll notes that devoid as it is of perfection, matter is unable to turn towards its generator and so remains unformed and in darkness. See W.J. Carroll, "Plotinus on the Origin of Matter", in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, 186.

[60] "Vestigial" is borrowed from Deck.

[61] Wagner, 296, notes that Plotinus does not tell us why this postulate is, or appears to be, a paradox, and speculates as to why this is so.

– and this is contrary to real beings whose objects of contemplation are the paradigms of which they are images. Thus soul's object of contemplation is Intellect – its paradigmatic parent. But time and the sensible objects do not contemplate the transcendental paradigms they copy. Thus time does not contemplate eternity and the sensible objects do not contemplate their noetic forms.

Moreover, Intellect and soul also differ from the echelons below them in the direction of their contemplation. In III.8(30).7, Plotinus' point – that all things including real beings derive from contemplation and are contemplations[62] – is hardly surprising, for this is the putative role of contemplation. However, the directions of such contemplations remain unclear. Are they aimed at priors or are they self-contemplations and is there a serious difference between the two? In III.8(30).4 nature claims that its forbears derive from contemplation and it derives from the same sort of contemplation that it engages in – namely *self*-contemplation. This implies: (1) nature derives from soul's pre-vision of nature within its own *self*-contemplation; (2) the hypostasis soul also derives from Intellect's pre-vision of soul within its *self*-contemplation; and (3) soul itself is a contemplation. As Deck notes, this third point is problematic, for as contemplator, soul is not quite united with its act of contemplating. Thus it cannot *be* contemplation. Yet, nature, with its looser contemplation is also depicted by Plotinus in the same way.[63] In fact, all three inferences are problematic and contradictory with respect to V.2(11).1, which does not allude to any horizontal *self*-contemplation. Intellect and soul engage in vertical primary contemplations of their priors that spawn the vertical down-flow of their secondary *poietic* activities. The chain of vertical contemplation continues downwards when these secondary activities bequeath merely the existence of their unformed progeny. To receive their forms, these latter must return in contemplation to their progenitors. As they do so, these progeny, in turn become progenitors and extrude their secondary activities further downwards to generate further progeny. Unlike horizontal self-contemplations, where only progenitors are contemplators, in the vertically linked contemplations of V.2(11).1, it is the progeny that are the incipient contemplators (Intellect contemplates the One), but they turn into progenitors as a result of their primary contemplations and propagate the emanative flow further downwards. To produce and govern its progeny (the world of sense), the World Soul, as progenitor reiterates this process of vertical contemplation and contemplates Intellect, its prior. It is the direct conduit of the light of fecundity emanating from Intellect as a result of its contemplation of Intellect. It is always illuminated even as it illuminates (II.9(33).2) and it gives the light it derives from Intellect to hold

[62] Deck, 54, interprets these opening lines of III.8(30).7 as: (1) producing beings produce *works* of contemplation; (2) these, or some of these *works* of contemplation are *objects* of contemplation for the human soul.

[63] *Ibid*., 52.

together and "fertilize" its progeny (Chapter 3). So far, all we have are vertical contemplations and no self-contemplations. However, in V.3(49).7–8, Plotinus alludes to the self-contemplation of Intellect when he tells us that Intellect is self-directed activity and as Deck notes, Intellect knows itself and thereby produces the visible universe through the mediation of soul and the *logoi*.[64] Also, in IV.8(6).3, the hypostasis soul engages in a twofold "look" that includes a self-contemplation. It looks at Intellect its prior and exercises its intelligence. It then looks at itself in a self-contemplation and orders, directs and governs that which is posterior to it.

Verticality in itself does not sacralize contemplation, if aimed at an inferior. Self-contemplation is likely to be better than downward contemplation. In fact, self-contemplation is arguably akin to contemplation of a prior – for the prior is engraved within the progeny and the progeny exists within the progenitor. Thus in V.3(49).7–8, the two coalesce at the highest level, for in coming to know the Good by learning its powers,[65] Intellect knows itself and as Armstrong notes, the idea that knowledge of God and self-knowledge go together was widespread and goes back to *Alcibiades* (I 133C). Thus, despite its verticality, what remains undeniably the most inferior form of contemplation is one which veers towards an inferior. If the inferior is the work or product of contemplation, then such making is weakening (III.8(30).4). V.2(11).1 contains not only the upward contemplations characteristic of the hypostases, but also, this type of inferior contemplation. As Rist notes, in this chapter, nature is not produced – as is the normal Plotinian hypostasis – as a result of the contemplation by a being of its prior. Instead, nature is produced by soul's desire for its inferior.[66] When nature contemplates itself in III.8(30).4, this is not merely the further declination in contemplation to be expected at the threshold of becoming – reflecting Plotinus' distinction between the hypostases (Intellect and soul) and their subsequents – but also nature's faint imitation of the self-contemplation of Intellect and soul. As Rist notes, the full power of contemplation belongs only to the hypostases and not to *logos* (seen apart from soul) or nature. *Logos* or nature, by themselves, when abstracted out of soul, can only dream of contemplation and their products are the ever-changing unreal particulars.[67] Nature departs from the examples of vertical contemplation by real beings and the World Soul in two ways. Instead of contemplating its prior to derive its own form (as in the case of real beings) and convey the generative light from its prior to its progeny (as in the case of the World Soul), (1) nature's object of contemplation is itself and (2) its *poiesis* flows directly from this self-contemplation. As Deck notes, in Plotinus' point – that nature's contemplation is directed neither "above" nor "below" – *below* must indicate matter. Regarding the

[64] *Ibid*., 58.

[65] Knowing the Good through its powers is not quite a union or direct vision. Thus Intellect's knowledge of the Good remains muted.

[66] Rist, 92.

[67] *Ibid*., 99.

"above", we might expect nature's contemplation to be directed *above* to the soul. But nature *is* soul at a certain level. It is a shadow of higher soul and nature's contemplation is the last vestige of soul's contemplation – a vestige of a contemplation seeking to become Intellect.[68]

In III.8(30).4, nature's objects of contemplation are not the sense objects of the cosmos *per se*. These are the weak *products* of its weak contemplation. As nature contemplates in silence (with the immediacy of geometers)[69] a dream-like pre-vision of these progeny within its hazy *self*-contemplation – they fall into existence. This pre-vision is limited by nature's ability – it sees "what comes after it" only "as far as it can". This qualification indicates – not only the weakness of nature's contemplation – but, as Deck notes, also that nature "knows" the things of nature insofar as they exist in nature, as their generator.[70] Nature's "blurred" self-contemplation is certainly weaker than the contemplation of soul, of which it is the progeny. However, its making is not weakening in the sense of III.8(30).4 – where making is weakening if the maker had nothing in view beyond the "thing done", and a consequence if he had a prior object of contemplation better than what he made – for nature's object of contemplation (itself) is superior to its progeny (the world of sense). Thus its making remains the consequence of its contemplation, rather than a weakening. Despite its vestigial and weak contemplation, nature is still capable of *poiesis* and is spared the research that devolves upon *praxis* – a contemplatively blind research that substitutes contemplation.

It is not only the object (*theorema*), but also the strength of contemplation that declines as *poiesis* descends from Intellect to the realm of process, reflecting perhaps the overall ontological decline in being, thought, and *poietic* strength. This decline is indicated by the externalization of contemplation and action. Contemplation is quieter, the more the knower unifies with what is known (Chapter 6). The hypostasis soul's contemplation is already weaker than Intellect's archetypal contemplation, in that it declines towards its progeny, even though it contemplates Intellect.[71] But nature's contemplation is still weaker in that it contemplates only itself.[72] In Chapters 3 and 5 Plotinus describes the descending

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[68] Deck, 66.

[69] As Wagner, 298, notes, one point of disanalogy between nature and Plotinus' contemplative geometer is that what immediately 'falls from' nature's attempt at contemplation is not sensible form but real activities, natural processes or 'Becomings'.

[70] See Deck, 67.

[71] Wagner, 304, notes that the weakness of hypostasis soul's contemplation is not a matter of blurredness or obscurity, but is seen in its need to utter and expound its object in order to learn it (III.8(30).6). However, as Deck, 51, notes, III.8(30).6, which deals with learning, refers clearly – not to the hypostasis soul – but only to the individual human soul.

[72] In Chapter 6 Plotinus tells us that Soul is quieter than nature since it possesses its content more completely. It is also more contemplative than nature since it has a greater content. While the hypostasis soul is indeed quieter and more contemplative than nature, the

sequence of manifestations of *logos* and contemplations. In every *logos*, its last and lowest manifestation is derived from contemplation. It is itself the object of contemplation and thus also a contemplation *per se*. The manifestation of the *logos* before this lowest level is the universal or total *logos*, differentiated in the two distinguishable phases of the undescended hypostasis soul and nature. Thus this emanative sequence of contemplations is causative-generative, for contemplation makes contemplation (Chapter 5). The strength of contemplation varies – not just metaphysically – but also immanently – for different things contemplate and attain their ends in different ways – some truly and some attaining only the mimesis and image of this true end (Chapter 1).

Conclusion

The procession of the many from the One is a diffusion of life, being and power, attended by growing otherness and ontological loss. This rising otherness manifests the differentiation and ranking of generated beings and the level of multiplicity within each. Beginning with the minimal fissure of Intellect which is one-many, otherness expands to the one-and-many of soul, reaching a peak in the teeming multiplicity of the world of sense. This loss – the nether aspect of emanation – is neither a degeneration of the One, which is inexhaustible, nor evil. While it is primarily because of the divine munificence of the Plotinian One that an efflux of growing multiplicity can cascade from it, the volition and motions of generated beings are also involved in perpetrating the momentum and direction of this efflux. Such willing is circumscribed by emanative necessity. There is thus a *poietic* logic to this emanation – a logic that stems from a rational metaphysics that constitutes the cogent bedrock of this architecture. Yet, Plotinian emanation surpasses the scope of the rational. While at its upper end it flows from the supra-rational One, irrational tones of *tolmatic* impulses punctuate its range all the way from the appearance of Intellect to that of the world of becoming. Thus, in his scattered accounts of emanation of generated beings, Plotinus is characteristic in his ability to reconcile tensions between opposing propensities by rising dialectically beyond them.

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references in this chapter, which deal with the individual human soul, need not apply literally to the hypostasis soul. See Deck, 51.

Chapter 7

Demiurge, Nature, and Matter

In those passages of the *Enneads* in which matter has an inception – and nature, acting as Intellect's *poietic* tool "manipulates" matter to make ensouled bodies – nature and the matter of the sense-world are immediate harbingers of the world of images. The curtain rises over the vista of the cosmological and cosmology proper ensues, once nature and matter herald – inadvertently and in the case of matter, passively – the pantomime of the sense-world. Although pre-cosmic, it is in this rich prelusive capacity – as elements of the architectonic ramparts of Plotinus' cosmology – that nature and matter bear unmistakably upon that which is cosmic. Notwithstanding its sheer ontological dearth and association with evil, the matter of the sense-world plays an inert, yet significant role in Plotinus' cosmology. Yet neither nature nor matter is literally demiurgic, for nature does not deliberate or decline when it, so to speak, engages in generation. And matter, which is incapable of deliberating, can decline no lower. Intellect, the key progenitor of this cosmological sphere, is its cause. But in what sense is it causal and how does causation entail demiurgic activity? How is nature generated? In what order do nature and sensible matter appear? What is matter and how, if at all, is it generated? These questions are addressed in two sections: (1) Demiurge, Nature, and the Sequence in which Nature and Matter appear, (2) The Matter of the Sense-World and its Appearance.

Demiurge, Nature, and the Sequence in which Nature and Matter appear

In his discourse on the cause of the being and structure of this All, Plotinus begins III.2(47).1 by directing his polemic against irrational doctrines that would attribute this All to "accident and chance" – doctrines with nihilistic tones. Rejecting the Epicurean denial of universal providence and the Gnostic postulation of an evil maker of the universe, Plotinus identifies Intellect, the living world of forms, as the "cause" of the universe – and explains quite how it serves as a progenitive, archetypal cause:

> Providence for the All is its being according to Intellect … Intellect is before it, not in the sense that it is prior in time but because the universe comes from Intellect and Intellect is prior in nature, and the cause of the universe as a kind of archetype and

> model, the universe being an image of it and existing by means of it and everlastingly coming into existence, in this way. (III.2(47).1)

Intellect is a cause that does not deliberate but makes in silent self-continence – by "remaining in itself". Yet, this does not render it aloof from the world. As Deck notes, Intellect is not a "spectator" of the physical world, but its producer. What kind of cause is Intellect? Plotinus has in mind what Deck describes as "real efficient causality" – distinct from the efficient causality envisaged by Aristotle. As "genuine making", Plotinian *poiesis* – which does not correspond exactly to Aristotle's efficient causality – can be called a "real efficient causality". Intellect is "more properly an efficient cause than are efficient causes in the sensible world". Intellect is, as Plotinus claims, the "ontic maker". Unlike physical causality, which operates within a uniform level of reality, the causality of Intellect cannot be "transmitted" down the vertical lineage – to soul and through soul to nature and the cosmos – for Intellect, soul, and nature are not on the same level of reality. Intellect's causality is transmitted through imitation, traversing manifold levels of reality – the world of sense by copying nature imitates Intellect on the level of being.[1]

Notwithstanding its causative role, Intellect seems in some sense non-demiurgic – at least in the lowest sense of demiurgic activity – for it neither deliberates nor reasons prior to its making, abiding unchanged instead. Yet Plotinus ascribes to Intellect the appellation of "Demiurge", perhaps because his notion of the demiurge is subtle and complex. As Gerson notes, the demiurge, in neither Plato nor Plotinus is equivalent to the Good.[2] The image of a divine craftsman or demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus*, who models the visible world following the pattern of the intelligible Forms, provoked philosophical controversies in Plato's academy as also in later Greek philosophy.[3] It was traditional in the Platonic school to identify the demiurge in the *Timaeus* with Divine Intellect. Plotinus seems to have retained this tradition. Yet, as Bréhier points out, Plotinus, like many before him, discards the anthropomorphic aspects of Plato's myth by rejecting all deliberation and mechanical action.[4] Following the older Platonic tradition Plotinus calls Intellect the "true demiurge and maker" of the universe (V.9(5).3 and II.3(52).18). In V.1(10).8 Plato's demiurge and "cause", which

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[1] J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 101, 109, 112.

[2] L.P. Gerson, "Plotinus's Metaphysics: Emanation or Creation?" *Review of Metaphysics* 46 (March 1993): 568.

[3] D.J. O'Meara, "Gnosticism and the Making of the World in Plotinus", in *The Structure of Being and the Search for the Good* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 1998), 365.

[4] In the myth of the *Timaeus*, Plato's "Demiurge" decides, after reflection, to form the Soul of the world in the way in which Athenian workmen made planetariums. É. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. J. Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 168. Such deliberation is inimical to *poiesis*.

makes "Soul" in the "mixing bowl", is Plotinus' Intellect. Again in V.8(31).7 Intellect is the demiurge whose craftsmanship is without "toil and trouble". Finally in V.9(5).3 Intellect is the true demiurge and maker of the universe. As the second divine principle after the One, Plotinus' demiurgic Intellect is quite the opposite of the malicious demiurge and son of the wanton Sophia, introduced by the Gnostics at the lowest border of the Pleroma.[5]

Plotinus uses demiurge in ways more multifaceted than first meets the eye. He goes beyond simply equating it with Intellect, ascribing demiurgic functions also at psychic levels. Armstrong delineates the progenitive role of soul amidst the demiurgic stature of Intellect, noting that Plotinus "always identifies Plato's craftsman with his own Intellect, never with Soul, whose function in making the physical universe he sees as subordinate and instrumental".[6] Yet, soul remains the "immediate maker". While Intellect is the "true demiurge and maker" – in that it supplies "Soul" the *logoi* according to which it makes – Plotinus makes it clear that it is "Soul" which actually engages in making the visible universe.[7] However, soul remains dependent on Intellect for its making. Although "real and important", the creative activity of Universal Soul is intermediary and entirely dependent on the creative energy of Intellect.[8] Likewise, O'Meara notes that although Plotinus frequently insists that the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* is to be identified with Intellect, the functions of the demiurge are clearly carried out by "Soul".[9] Exactly what Plotinus means by the demiurge is complex, for as Bréhier points out, Plotinus defines the demiurgic function more precisely than he does the demiurge itself. This function is "radiation" and the being from which this radiation emanates is identified by Bréhier as the hypostasis soul.[10] Gerson takes the demiurge in Plotinus to be the intellect of the soul of the universe, inferring the latter to be the soul of the demiurge. The relation between intellect and soul in the demiurge approximates that in the individual – "the relation between the intellect of the demiurge and its soul will be the relation of the intellect of an individual and its soul writ large with the important difference that a faculty of discursive reasoning is absent from the former".[11]

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[5] Th.G. Sinnige, *Six Lectures on Plotinus and Gnosticism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 69, 73.

[6] *Plotinus Ennead V*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 40, note 1.

[7] A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 252; *Plotinus Ennead III*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 410, note 1.

[8] *Plotinus Ennead IV*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 160–161, note 1.

[9] O'Meara, 370, note 23.

[10] Bréhier, 172.

[11] Gerson, 57, points out that the demiurge and particular intellects share in universal intellect in two ways: (1) by being "cognitively identical" with all the Forms, with universal

In its subtle flexibility, this subordinate, demiurgic function of soul borders between pristine noetic intellection and the distended thinking characteristic of human reasoning. Citing V.1(10).3, where the closeness of soul and Intellect is "both affirmed and denied", Gurtler notes that the nature of the hypostasis soul borders the intelligible and sensible worlds, serving as a "generative mediator" between the two. It is this function of soul that is clearly demiurgic. Yet, the "proper activity" of soul remains intellectual, notwithstanding its demiurgic function, which lies in its capacity as a "repository" of the *logoi* that operate in the generation of the world of sense. Its inferior activities, which come from "elsewhere" and belong to an inferior type of soul, are connoted by *logismos* and *logos*.

In the opening lines of III.9(13).1 Plotinus cites Plato's *Timaeus* (39E, 7–9): "'Intellect', Plato says, 'sees the Ideas existing in the real living creature' then, he says: 'the Maker planned that, what Intellect sees in the real living creature, this universe too should have'".[12] From his exegesis of this quotation, Plotinus discerns between intelligible subject (Intellect) and intelligible object ("real living creature") and concludes that the demiurge is Intellect: "This, then, is that which 'planned' to make in this universe the four kinds of living creatures which it sees in the intelligible". Yet, as Gurtler notes, planning is inappropriate to Intellect. This forces Plotinus to reach for a third, which does the actual planning and "dividing" entailed in the generation of the sensible world – something other than Intellect and the living creature – and this, he concludes is "Soul": "This – planning – is not the work of Intellect, but of Soul, which has a divided activity in a divided nature".[13] Soul plans – yet, as Gurtler cautions – the "strict sense of *dianoia* as discursive thought must be guarded against", for both the hypostasis soul and the World Soul. Soul has perhaps an anterior "planning-in-itself" that precedes the actual division into bodies executed by the World Soul. In its planning, the World Soul does not deliberate when it divides, so that *logismos* or *dianoia* and their cognates in the hypostasis soul and World Soul cannot have the "discursive character" they do in the human soul. The demiurge, on all its levels – Intellect, hypostasis soul and

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intellect the "*summum genus*" of the Forms and (2) by being "engaged in an activity, intellection, whose Form is also universal intellect". L.P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London: Routledge, 1994), 56–7, 63.

[12] As in V.1(10).10, IV.4(28).12, II.9(33).6, V.8(31).6–8 and VI.7(38).1, here too the demiurgic function is associated with planning. In each of these passages Plotinus tries to resolve seeming contradictions between the description of the demiurgic function as planning and the "ontological nature of Intellect and Soul", which precludes movement. G.M. Gurtler, "Providence: The Platonic Demiurge and Hellenistic Causality", in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, M.F. Wagner (ed.) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 103.

[13] As Armstrong points out, this passage lends support to Porphyry who held that Soul was the demiurge and believed this interpretation agreed with that of Plotinus. See *Plotinus Ennead III*, 410, note 1.

World Soul – is devoid of the discursive reasoning and contact with the sensible world characteristic of the *praxis* (as opposed to *poiesis*) involved in human artistic endeavor. Thus it does not need to plan, form a hypothesis, foresee or make deductions, for it does not work with a pre-existing contingent thing.[14]

Taking Plotinus' formulation of a "contemplative, non-demiurgic" way of making the world as his participation in the discourse on problems traditionally associated with the interpretation of Plato's demiurge in the *Timaeus*, O'Meara delineates a somewhat different notion of the Plotinian demiurge. From his earliest treatises, it is evident that Plotinus is aware of the by then long history in philosophical schools of "criticisms and interpretations" of the notion of a demiurgic production of the world. Plotinus accepts the Aristotelian position – that unlike "craftsmanly" production, natural production precludes deliberation and calculation. He rejects from natural production the gross manual methods imputed to Plato's demiurge by the Epicureans. He uses both demiurgic as well as emanative processes – ascribing demiurgic functions to soul and relying on emanative processes to depict the making of the world. As O'Meara points out, there are some notable developments in these earliest treatises in which Plotinus does not seem to exceed these traditional ideas to go towards a "coherent and defensible" Platonic cosmology. One ruse he uses is to absolve the universal soul of the actual work of cosmic demiurgic functions – not by removing them – but by transferring these to the lower descended souls. Thus in IV.8(6).2 Plotinus discerns between universal soul, which "commands but does not do", and particular souls, relegating "personal productive action" to the latter.[15]

As O'Meara notes, hypostatic production – of Intellect from the One and the hypostasis soul from Intellect – and the production of the "descended souls" from universal soul follow a "non-demiurgic mode of production" even in Plotinus' first compositions. The productive process – wherein a secondary activity, distinct from the primary "essential unchanging activity" of the producing being is formed in a "contemplative orientation" to its producer to form an image of its origin – is non-demiurgic insofar as the producing principle makes without changing. When it comes to the making of the world of sense, such a non-demiurgic mode of production is found only in Plotinus' later treatises – at that, in the context of his polemic against Gnosticism. In IV.4(28).10, which is slightly earlier than II.9(33) where Plotinus explicitly confronts Gnosticism, Plotinus denies that soul as maker must calculate what she should make. The maker here is the "already established" order according to which things are made. This "maker/order" is an activity of soul and as IV.4(28).13 indicates, the lowest level of this activity is nature. In 10, this activity of soul is dependent on an "abiding Intellect of which the image is the order in soul". This means, as Bréhier notes, the presiding hierarchy is Intelligence,

[14] Gurtler, 99–124.

[15] Here the translation in O'Meara's "Gnosticism and the Making of the World in Plotinus", 369, was used.

intelligible order, soul, and image of the intelligible order or activity of soul. This inner order is the directing principle.[16] O'Meara points out that insofar as Intellect abides and soul's contemplative reliance on Intellect, which precludes calculation, uncertainty and perplexity, is unchanging, soul's activity is unchanging as well – thus ruling out memory from soul in her "demiurgic role" and the concept of demiurgic activity (IV.4(28).10, 12).

Finally, as O'Meara demonstrates, the production of the sense-world is non-demiurgic also in III.8(30) and V.8(31). In III.8(30), the specter of a "deliberating and laboring demiurgic maker of the world" is replaced by Nature – a "psychic principle" – in which, making is being and nature's being is contemplative so that it "makes by being contemplation". In V.8(31).7 as well there is a denial of planning and deliberation in the making of the world – "… because things There are disposed as they are, the things here are beautifully disposed … [the world-order] is not the result of following out a train of logical consequences and purposive thought: it is before consequential and purposive thinking".[17]

Given these discourses on demiurgic versus contemplative, non-demiurgic processes of production of the Plotinian sense-world, where do the peculiarities of III.7(45).11 fit in? Although a late treatise, soul's making of time and the world of sense here may not be non-demiurgic. To the extent that the hypostasis soul, afflicted by its *polupragmatic* nature, ceases to abide and stirs out of noetic rest (*stasis*), its consequent making should be demiurgic and a "demiurgic specter" of sorts perhaps lingers – but not one that deliberates, reasons, plans or calculates its production. However, insofar as any planning on the part of soul – evident perhaps in its decline to a higher discursion – transcends the level of human discursive reasoning and contingent contact with the sensible world characteristic of the *praxis* involved in human endeavor, the edifice of soul here perhaps engages in a "planning-in-itself" and retains a trace of a demiurgic stature. Thus in Gurtler's words – "Though unified in itself as within the Intelligible world, this focus outward to the division of sensible bodies makes the term 'planning' a more fitting description of its [the hypostasis soul's] activity".[18]

In II.2(14).1 Plotinus defines nature: "'Nature' is just what has been ordained by universal soul". Indeed, the World Soul can "ordain" nature (*phusis*), for it is the "last and lowest" part of the World Soul, an image of its wisdom and in possession of the last irradiated *logos* (IV.4(28).13). Nature bridges the intelligible and visible worlds. There is a vertical lineage of beauty from soul, through nature, to the body. There is in nature a *logos* which is the archetype of beauty in body. The source of nature's *logos* is the still more beautiful *logos* in soul (V.8(31).3). As Deck notes, nature, functioning in plants and the earth, is "closely correlative" to the generative-vegetative soul in man and animal. Deck also notes that in nature,

[16] Bréhier, 172.
[17] O'Meara, 368–374, 377–8.
[18] Gurtler, 121, note 5.

the distinction between the intelligible and the visible worlds might appear blurred. On the one hand, nature is a soul and a *logos*. It is immobile, distinct from matter and body and incorporeal. Nature must be an intelligible form (*eidos*) and not composed of matter and form (V.9(5).6, III.8(30).2). Yet in IV.4(28).13 Plotinus claims that nature is that which comes from the World Soul and is reflected "into" matter. Nature is a soul (III.8(30).4), but as Deck notes, not "without qualifications". It is the offspring of a "prior" soul and the lowest hypostasis generated by soul when it descends into plants (V.2(11).1), but also a mirror image of soul bequeathed by soul onto body (I.1(53).8).[19] Inge describes Plotinian nature as the "moving power" of the World Soul, through which the sensible world is created. Nature lends outer expression to the World Soul. It is the "active faculty of the World-Soul, its outer life, the expansion of its energy, that without which it would be shut up in itself, mute and inactive". Yet, nature is also the "activity of matter" – it lends "substantiality" to matter, without which matter is a mere "nonentity". Nature is the rational and thus "unvarying expression of a perfect intelligence". While nature is real, the material bodies, receiving through nature "impressions" of the World Soul, are not. Although nature is real, the reality of nature is weak, for as Corrigan notes, nature is an image (*eidôlon*), insofar as the "truth of her vision is not in herself but comes from soul and intellect".[20]

If Plotinus has a general *poietic* script whereby nature is derived from the World Soul, it is perhaps Inge who sums it up most eloquently – "Soul, in the very act of turning towards the source of its own life, creates a fainter image of that life – a grade inferior to its own, but a true if indistinct copy of the radiant existences in which God beholds His own glory".[21] A sample of passages in which Plotinus describes the making of nature are V.2(11).1, IV.4(28).13, III.8(30).4, II.1(40).5, III.3(48).4, II.3(52).17–18 and I.1(53).8. In V.2(11).1 soul produces nature as its image, by desiring its inferior, thereby declining and thus departing from the norm of self-continence characteristic of emanative *poiesis* among the higher hypostases. That nature is the offspring, image and trace of the World Soul and affected adversely in its powers by this precarious ontological position, is abundantly clear from many passages of the *Enneads*. In IV.4(28).13, nature, the "last and lowest" part of the World Soul, possesses a trace of intellectuality or the last "ray" of the *logos* which shines in it. As a result, nature does not know, but only makes. Bereft of even the "imaging faculty", nature has no "grasp or consciousness" of anything. Reflected from the World Soul onto matter, nature in turn acts on matter and is affected by it. In III.8(30).4, as already stated, nature is a soul – the "offspring" of a "prior soul with a stronger life". In II.1(40).5, nature is the image of the

[19] Deck, 64–5.

[20] K. Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005), 125.

[21] W.R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, vol. I (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 155, 161–2.

"heavenly soul" or World Soul that "so to speak" flows down from above to make living things on earth. In III.3(48).4, from the highest part of soul descends a *logos* to the visible world – a *logos* with two connected aspects, one which is creative, while the other links superiors to inferiors. Rist concludes that this creative *logos*, or *logos poietikos*, which derives providentially from higher soul and ultimately from Intellect, is nature.[22] In II.3(52).17, Intellect "gives" to the World Soul, which in turn gives to nature, or "the soul next after it", "enlightening it and impressing form on it". In II.3(52).18, the World Soul aspires to intelligible nature and God and contemplates the "best". As a result it is full "to the brim" and its trace or "last and lowest expression" is nature. Finally, in I.1(53).8, nature is a mirror image of soul given by soul to body.

Prima facie it might seem that the ontological phase of the procession from the One ceases with the appearance of the last of the divine realities – the hypostasis soul and its species souls (the World Soul and the particular species souls). The procession then declines further to the realm of process, to terminate with the conjoint appearance of time and the world of sense. Cosmology proper applies only to this latter sub-ontological phase of the procession, subject to becoming, which ensues with the appearance of the discursive and iconic realm wherein mere images of real beings are accrued discursively. Yet the two spheres – of original verities and their corresponding images – are not disjoint. They admit of a third. The cosmological sphere is qualified – not only by the procreant world of real beings – but also by the pre-cosmic realm comprising two incorporeal progeny – nature (*phusis*) and matter (*hylê*) – which signal with their appearance, the *terminus* of the pre-cosmic. The generation of the visible cosmos presupposes a prior eternal appearance of nature and sensible matter.[23] Even incorporeal time – which is autonomous with respect to matter and constructed by soul, rather than nature – is indirectly associated with matter insofar as it appears with the cosmos – and the generation of the cosmos entails a concourse with matter.[24] Thus the appearances of nature and matter constitute a pre-cosmic interface wedged between the appearance of the highest sphere of divine realities and the lowest iconic realm of becoming. Insofar as it is a real being, even if a mere trace, nature should be the last existent to appear in the ontological phase of the procession.

It is noteworthy that the order in which Intellect, soul and nature appear in the emanation from the One is commensurate with their ontological ranks. The appearance of Intellect and soul is clearly sequential – with soul posterior to

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[22] J.M. Rist, *Plotinus. The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 96–7.

[23] The rest of this section pertains only to those tractates of the *Enneads* where matter has an appearance.

[24] For the thesis that the logical structure of Plotinus' thought requires that "matter" and "time" be understood as different expressions for the same principle, see J.M. Simons, "Matter and Time in Plotinus", *Dionysius* 9 (1985): 53–74.

Intellect, its ontological prior.[25] Nature is lower than both the hypostasis soul, the last of the divine realities, as also the World Soul. Accordingly, it appears logically "after" the edifice of soul. Although itself a real being, nature is flanked by the higher world of divine verities above it and the lower mimetic world of time and the world of sense below it. Thus nature is the lowest and ultimate conduit between the intelligible world and visible world of imitations and Plotinus himself specifies nature as the boundary between these two – "… before it, the real beings come to a stop, and these are the last and lowest realities of the intelligible world: for what comes after at this point is imitation" (IV.4(28).13). Thus Inge depicts nature as the "lowest of the spiritual existences" and Deck situates nature on the "borderline" between real beings and imitations, describing it as the "penultimate stage in the watering-down of the *Nous's* being and intellectuality" and the "last irradiation of soul towards body". As the "most enfeebled of real things", nature is not exactly a real being. Its inadequacy is indicated by the inferiority of its contemplation compared to that of a real being.[26]

Does Plotinus retain this consistency between the ontological order and the order of appearances when it comes to nature and the matter of the sense-world? Given its very lowest rank and ontological nullity, should matter appear, well below nature, after time and the world of sense? Here it helps to remember that in Plotinus' thought, the logical order or *taxis* of the procession from the One is anything but unyielding. Plotinus is hardly obdurate as regards the metaphysical order of his derived reality. This is affirmed by Armstrong's point that powerful as he is in his critical sense in matters of logic and his ability to argue discursively, Plotinus shares Plato's skepticism about "our incurably discursive prosaic language and thinking", he is not too concerned about precise lines of demarcation between especially the lower two members of his simple hierarchy (Intellect and the hypostasis soul) or about consistency in his accounts of the relations between them. In fact, there are even anti-hierarchical elements in his thinking.[27] Applied to our present problem this means that the logical order of appearances in Plotinian emanation need not comply with the ontological order. A case in point is that of time with respect to the cosmos. Notwithstanding their disparity – for as an entimed entity, the cosmos is inferior to time – the appearance of time is clearly coeval with that of the cosmos. There is perhaps no such anomaly in the case of matter and nature. As the lower aspect of the World Soul, nature – with its vestigial

[25] This clear sequence in the appearance of Intellect and soul does not belie the fact that the two hypostases are not always distinct. For the blurriness in differences between Intellect and soul see H.J. Blumenthal, "*Nous* and Soul in Plotinus: Some Problems of Demarcation", in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993).

[26] Inge, 155; Deck, 65, note 2, 72.

[27] A.H. Armstrong, "Negative Theology", in *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), 182.

trace of real being – should complete the ontological phase of the procession, with matter, its inferior, appearing well after it, subsequent to the entire procession of real beings.

A more troubling case is that of matter with respect to the cosmos. In contrast to nature, matter is inferior to the cosmos and ranks lowest in the hierarchy from the One – for unlike the bodies of the cosmos, which are at least images of real beings, matter is altogether bereft of being. Yet the cosmos cannot appear, until Intellect and its instruments – soul and nature – have incorporeally encountered matter. In III.6(26).14 Plotinus asks and answers, "If matter did not exist, would nothing come into existence? No, and there would be no image either, if a mirror or something of the sort did not exist". We are thus left with the irony that although ontologically null and posterior to the very bodies that draw upon it, ranking well below them, matter has to appear prior to bodies – for the enmattered cosmos cannot otherwise be produced. In II.5(25).5, Plotinus' words indicate as much, thus expressing an incongruity between the order of appearances and the sub-ontological existential order with respect to matter and the sense-world – "when the realities of the intelligible world had already come to an end it appeared and was caught by the things that came into being after it and took its place as the last after these too". Here the world of sense, composed of matter and form, appears after matter, thus allowing matter to enter into its constitution – even though, in the existential order, matter takes its place last, after these "things" that appear after it. Thus, the procession from the One starts with Intellect, followed by the hypostasis soul and its species souls (including the World Soul), then nature, then matter – in those tractates of the *Enneads* where matter has an appearance – and then becoming and alteration (III.6(26).13), finally ending with the conjoint appearance of time and the world of sense.[28] However in the ontological order, the divine verities, including the World Soul and particular species souls, are followed by nature – with time and the world of sense subsequent in the sub-ontological realm of becoming and matter trailing in at the end to take its place at the very base of this order. The incongruity between the order of procession and this ontological order points to a trace of perhaps admissible irrationality – matter appears logically prior to the world of sense it is inferior to.

[28] As Carroll notes, since all things after the One are other than It, they share some characteristics of matter. In the initial overflow they are produced as indefinite. But when converted to their source they are informed and thus, complete hypostases. W.J. Carroll, "Plotinus on the Origin of Matter", in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, M.F. Wagner (ed.) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 183.

The Matter of the Sense-World and its Appearance

As Armstrong notes, where matter is concerned, Plotinus differs from Aristotle in accepting matter in the intelligible world and identifying matter in the world of sense with privation. However, when he argues for an incorporeal, dimensionless matter, he maintains Aristotle's doctrine against the Stoics.[29] Plotinus distinguishes three types of matter in the *Enneads* – sensible,[30] celestial, and intelligible.[31] Both sensible matter and intelligible matter participate in otherness and both are indefinite. But while the formless and indeterminate (*amorphon kai aoriston*) intelligible matter stands for an archetypal indefiniteness, sensible matter – its formless and indeterminate image – is far more indefinite, because it is farther away from true Being. Whereas intelligible matter is other than the hyperontic One, matter of the sense-world is a particular kind of otherness or privation. It is other with respect to Being itself. At that, its privation is ugly, for it is a malignant lack of form. It is a "want of" thought, virtue, beauty, strength, shape, form, and quality (II.4(12).16).[32] The otherness or privation of sensible matter is not quality or qualified, or in Rist's words, it is not "Quality or a quality", but negation of "Quality" (II.4(12).13). As Rist notes, for Plotinus, negations of qualities are not themselves qualities. In being devoid of qualities, matter is "mere potentiality without potency". Although matter is distinct from otherness (II.4(12).16), the

[29] *Plotinus Ennead II*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 104–5.

[30] Corrigan suggests that there are three levels to this "lower" matter – (1) the highest level that started by belonging to the intelligible world, but "walked out of True Being", (2) an "everlastingly unlit" "pre-cosmic" matter, "in, or at the bottom of, the intelligible world", and (3) matter that is the final substrate of sensible objects. O'Brien discovers in Corrigan a fourth level of "lower" matter. Corrigan also claims three different "generations" of matter. However, O'Brien considers Corrigan's distinction between cosmic and pre-cosmic matter to be chimerical, claiming that the "whole rambling and ramshackle edifice of three (or more) 'matters', and of three (or more) 'generations', collapses". D. O'Brien, *Plotinus on the Origin of Matter: An Exercise in the Interpretation of the Enneads* (Bibliopolis, 1991), 45–6, 53–4, 83.

[31] As Fielder points out, both "material principles" (the intelligible and sensible) provide the "matrix" in which a higher level of reality is "immanently" present. Given that soul is a hypostasis between *nous* and the sensible world and an image of *nous* – the generation of soul should require a "material principle" of its own. But such a principle is "conspicuously absent". See J.H. Fielder, "*Chorismos* and Emanation in the Philosophy of Plotinus", in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, R.B. Harris (ed.) (Albany: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), 114.

[32] As Merlan notes, the whole treatise, II.4(12), with its division of matter into intelligible and sensible and Plotinus' "ringing accusation" that sensible matter is ugly and evil just because it is devoid of beauty and the good, shows "an inspiration completely different from Speusippus", at least where sensible matter is concerned. P. Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), 115.

otherness of matter is, as Rist notes, its very nature – one that can receive "a flux of changing qualities", without being qualified.[33]

While intelligible matter or "matter of eternal things" always possesses the same form, "matter here" is always receiving different forms (II.4(12).3).[34] However, unlike divine matter, the matter of the sensible world cannot participate in form (III.6(26).14) – or truly unite with form. Where intelligible matter is joined to form (II.4(12).5), so that, as O'Brien notes, it "cannot *not* participate", sensible matter retains its potentiality and is incapable of participation because it is unable to become wholly united with form. Moreover, while divine or intelligible matter gains intelligent life, when defined by form, the matter of the sense-world is not thus resurrected. It is merely defined, but not rendered alive or thinking when adorned as body. All that soul drapes matter with is the mere *appearance* of form. This virtual ornamentation does not seep into it. Thus, as Plotinus grimly reminds us, with what O'Brien describes as a "gripping metaphor", the matter of the sense-world remains no more than a mere "decorated corpse" (II.4(12).5).[35]

Unlike eternal celestial matter – which forms the heavens above the moon and is devoid of evil (II.1(40).4, II.9(33).8)[36] – the impassive matter of the sense-world is identified by Plotinus with "essential evil without any share in good" (I.8(51).5), thus rendering it the fullest and chief participant in evil.[37] Plotinus delineates similarities between the matter of the sense-world and evil. Like primal evil, matter is absolutely deficient, entirely devoid of being, hence without any share in good (I.8(51).5), and devoid of form and quality.[38] Yet Plotinus also discerns between the two[39] – deeming absolute evil logically prior to sensible matter and matter thus

[33] J.M. Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", *Phronesis* 6 (1961): 155–6.

[34] Carroll, 181.

[35] O'Brien, 23, 24, note 39.

[36] Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", 155, note 2.

[37] Plotinus expresses the inherent evil of matter most clearly both in his early treatise, II.4(12), as well as in his late treatise, I.8(51). In Porphyry's chronology, the treatises against the Gnostics fall between these two. Thus, as Rist points out – arguing against Puech – Plotinus maintained that matter is evil both early in his writing career as well as late – at the time of his death – and was on this issue unaffected by his break with the Gnostics. Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", 154.

[38] Notwithstanding its uncanny similarity to the One – for both are exterior to being – evil is really the opposite of the One. It lacks – rather than supersedes – measure and form. Thus, as Carroll, 196, notes, evil is "infra-being" as opposed to the One, which is "supra-being".

[39] Rist and Inge use two scales – a scale of existence and a scale of value – to assess matter. Rist notes that on the scale of existence, sensible matter is the furthest removed from Being, as much as evil is the furthest removed in the scale of value. Inge, 131, 133, also distinguishes the "scale of existence" from the "scale of values". While the former runs from a positive point to zero, with no minus signs, in the latter, any point is to the point above it, a minus, or an evil, for it can possibly divert from orientation to the One. Since

secondary to evil – perhaps the fullest participant in primary evil, more so than vice or bodies (I.8(51).4–5, 8).[40]

As O'Brien notes, Plotinus designates matter as one among three different kinds of non-being – in between absolute non-being and the Platonic notion of otherness as non-being.[41] In a later work, O'Brien points to the distinction Plato makes in the *Sophist* between two definitions of non-being, both of which pertain to the existence of a form of otherness. These are – (1) non-being as an "opposition between the form of being and that part of the form of otherness that is opposed to being" (258a11–b4); and (2) non-being as "that part of the form of otherness which is opposed to the being of each thing" (258d7–e3). Their difference lies in the distinction between "being" as form (the more general form or "nature" of being in 1) and "being" as particular (the specificity of "the being of each thing" in 2). For Plotinus, the non-being of sensible matter complies with Plato's second definition of non-being and not the first.[42] Insofar as it is *other* than Being, matter is non-being and only a "potentiality of Being" (II.5(25).4–5). Yet, "it has a certain sort of existence" as privation (II.4(12).16) – for as Plato concludes, in his distinctions

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matter is at the bottom of both scales, it is metaphysically the "really unreal" and morally "absolute evil". As Inge and Carroll, 193–4, note, matter is used by Plotinus as a purely relative term. In the hierarchy of the Plotinian universe, each stage, with the exception of the First (the One) and the Last, is both form (*eidos*) and matter (*hylê*). It is form (*eidos*) in relation to its subsequent and matter (*hylê*) in relation to the prior that acts upon it. As First, the One is form to all and matter to none, while matter, as Last, is matter to all and form to none. Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", 160; E. B. Costello, "Is Plotinus Inconsistent on the Nature of Evil?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1967): 486.

[40] Yet insofar as matter is evil before soul and the cause of soul's weakness and vice, matter is assessed by Plotinus as a "primary" evil (*prôton kakon*) (I.8(51).14).

[41] O'Brien, 17–18.

[42] As O'Brien, 173, points out – regarding Plotinus' taking Plato's second definition of non-being as a definition of matter – Plotinus uses what later became Simplicius' altered version recorded in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* (*Phys.* 238.26). Simplicius changes the Stranger's second definition of non-being, to the opposition between a part of the form of otherness and "each being" – instead of "the being of each thing". Citing I.8(51).3, O'Brien notes further that the non-being that is evil and to be identified with matter, is neither "absolute non-being" (*to pantelôs mê on*), nor non-being in the way in which movement and rest can be said to be non-being, but "a form which is of what is not" (*eidos ti tou mê ontos on*). This latter expression is from the preliminaries to the second definition of non-being in the *Sophist* (258d5–7). See D. O'Brien, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 172–4. Armstrong clarifies that in I.8(51).3, Plotinus is not using "non-being" in the sense in which it could be applied to "a term logically distinct from being" – as "motion" is from "being". Rather, he is using "non-being" to depict matter as a "pseudo-being, something which really is not being, a real unreality". See *Plotinus: Porphyry on Plotinus Ennead I*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 282–3, note 3.

among the kinds of negation in the *Sophist*, not being some *thing* is not the same as absolute non-existence.[43]

Commentators like Simons have described Plotinus' sensible matter as the "cause of Becoming" and a "principle of the phenomenal realm".[44] Despite its impassivity, ontological destitution, connotations of evil and consequent dearth in fecundity, matter of the sense-world is central to the generation of this world. In Plotinus' own words, "matter … makes the greatest contribution to the formation of bodies" (II.4(12).12). Matter is the substrate and receptacle of forms, analogous to a mirror, but only to a degree. As Carroll and Rist note, it does not have even the real existence that a mirror has over and above the appearances in it.[45] Plotinus himself discerns in III.6(26).13 that while a mirror is visible on account of its form, matter is not. Matter of the sense-world is the formless, indeterminate substratum (II.4(12).6), which, like a mirror receives a flux of changing qualities. The qualities of bodies which appear in matter enter only "falsely into falsity". Like the "receptacle" in Plato's *Timaeus*, the matter of the sense-world receives forms passively. Alluding to the *Timaeus* (49A5–6), Plotinus tells us that if matter is the formless "receptacle" and "nurse" of all becoming, becoming is other than it, that which undergoes alteration is in becoming, and matter exists before both becoming and alteration (III.6(26).13).

It is anything but clear as to how matter itself originates in the *Enneads* – if at all. Some passages on the formation of body from matter are silent on the origin of matter (III.2(47).2 and III.6(26).14). Whether matter should have an origin, is in itself a moot point. Thus, defining matter as the "negation of all being", Pistorius asks: "How can that which is not, be created?"[46] The problem of the origin of matter and its position in the universe is characterized by Carroll as the "Plotinian albatross" that weighed most heavily on Plotinus in his later years. It has notable implications for Plotinus' purported monism. Carroll notes that Plotinus held at least three positions regarding the origin of sensible matter in the *Enneads*, with the first predominating.[47] First, although matter is not nothing, Plotinus did not know where to place its origin in his philosophical system. The position of matter in the Plotinian universe is unknown even to Plotinus himself. This is particularly true of his earliest treatises. Thus II.4(12) and III.2(47).2 are silent on the origin of the matter of the sense-world. In V.8(31).7 Intellect shapes matter but does not cause matter to be matter. Plotinus is silent on the causal connection between Intellect and matter. In III.6(26).14, matter is no longer produced, but is that which stalls all production.

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[43] Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", 156–7; Carroll, 184.

[44] Simons, 54.

[45] Carroll, 184; Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", 157.

[46] P.V. Pistorius, *Plotinus and Neoplatonism: An Introductory Study* (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1952), 68.

[47] Carroll, 199–202.

Second, matter is independent of the One and thus a principle opposed to it. This dualistic view, exhibited in I.8(51), is at odds with Plotinus' monistic mysticism, characterized by Mamo as a "qualified monism".[48] Yet, even if matter is thus the dualistic converse of the Good, in Plotinus' thought there is no rivalry between divine beings and matter. As Bréhier notes, divine reality is secure from all contact with the impure.[49]

Third, matter is dependent on the One and it is the end product of the emanation from the One. This strictly monistic view, is exhibited in III.4(15).1, where Plotinus traces the origin of matter to the power of growth generated by soul. The power of growth produces – not a limited indefiniteness or the "indefiniteness within form"– but *absolute* indetermination (*aoristian pantelê*) characteristic of sensible matter,[50] which is then enformed into body.[51]Although depicted as "absolute indefiniteness", this sterile matter of the sense-world derives from the chain of realities emanating from the One.

Perhaps Plotinus holds a fourth position in II.3(52).17, III.9(13).3, III.4.(15).1, and IV.3(27).9 – one with monistic potential insofar as matter *appears* through an emanatory lineage from the One, yet quasi-dualistic in that matter is largely devoid of the Good and thus "apart" from all realities. In II.3(52).17, matter is derived from the devolution from Intellect. It is the lowest soul's contribution to the Whole, "bitter and embittering" and "a sort of sediment of the prior realities". Yet, notwithstanding its imperfections, matter here remains a living being – although it finds its own life "disgusting" as it is the "worst of living beings". As "a sort of sediment of the prior realities", it has a trace of life – but a life so imperfect that it is largely barren with respect to the Good present in prior realities. In chapters like III.9(13).3, III.4.(15).1, and IV.3(27).9, matter is largely penultimate and eternally generated. As part of the emanation from the One, it is generated *en route* to the production of body, but is so bereft of the Good as to be almost severed or "far removed from reality" (III.9(13).3). In III.9(13).3, the "partial" soul contemplating herself, makes as her direct image, what comes after her – the "non-existent". As both Deck and O'Brien suggest – this darkened, irrational image, far removed from reality, is sensible matter.[52] In a later treatise, IV.3(27).9, Plotinus describes the privative darkness at the fringe of the efflux, or "firelight" radiating from the World Soul, as the "substrate for form", which soul transforms to body. As O'Brien notes, "the outermost limits of the fire" is an image of the One and the products that flow from the One, and the darkness is a synonym for matter. The light *becomes* darkness, or matter is *generated* for darkness should not exist

[48] P.S. Mamo, "Is Plotinian Mysticism Monistic?" in *Significance of Neoplatonism*, 206.
[49] Bréhier, 180.
[50] See O'Brien, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", 182.
[51] As Carroll, 186, notes, referring especially to III.4(15).1, the very metaphysical structure of bodies requires matter to be indeterminate.
[52] Deck, 44; O'Brien, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", 182.

independently of the light. If it did, Plotinus would be guilty of the Gnostic[53] dualistic doctrine of a pre-existing, independent darkness – a doctrine he denounces.[54] Deck too notes that Plotinus again uses a "two-step" producing of body in this chapter – in the first, the World Soul produces matter and in the second, the universe from matter.[55] Matter *qua* darkness connotes so great a chasm with respect to reality that a quasi-duality returns.

In I.8(51).7 and II.5(25).5, the dualism is subtle. I.8(51).7, which starts out on an apparently dualistic note – with matter, the source of evil in this universe, juxtaposed as the contrary of God, the source of good (through Intellect) in this universe – ends on an apparently a monistic note. Matter and evil are the "Last" existents in the "process of going out past it, or … going down or going away" from the Good, or the First. Matter seems to derive from the Good, yet "possesses nothing at all of the Good". Thus, this location of matter at the base of the "process" of exteriorization from the One does not mean that it originates in the One – for in that case, matter would have a share in the Good and it does not. As Carroll notes, in 1.8(51) Plotinus is concerned – not with the problem of the origin of matter as such – but with the necessity of matter, his discussions of which are replete with dualistic connotations.[56] Likewise, II.5(25).5 starts out on a dualistic note – matter is "as if cast out and utterly separated", and stands "apart from all realities". Matter exists "potentially to what comes next", or as Deck notes, matter "*is* not" but rather "is always about to be".[57] Yet absolute dualism is ruled out insofar as matter *appears* – "… when the realities of the intelligible world had already come to an end it appeared" – although as a phantasm. Thus matter cannot be the uncreated absolute contrary of the Good.

Commentators are divided on the origin and role of matter in the Plotinian universe. As Carroll notes, their views fall into three positions.[58] In the first, held by Bréhier and Pistorius, matter is independent of the One and opposed actively or passively to it. Pistorius's view is more extreme than that of Bréhier, who contends that matter is independent of the One, yet participates eternally in the Good. For Pistorius, insofar as eternal matter is the negation of Being it was never created.[59]

According to the second position – a monistic one held by Dodds, Henry, Armstrong, Inge, Trouillard, O'Brien and Deck – matter is the ultimate progeny of the emanative procession from the One. If matter were independent of the One and uncreated, then Plotinus would lapse into a dualism, notwithstanding the monistic intent behind his mysticism. Armstrong contends that Plotinus' account of matter

[53] Plotinus denounces the Gnostics in II.9(33).6, 8–10.
[54] O'Brien, *Plotinus on the Origin of Matter*, 19–20.
[55] Deck, 45.
[56] Carroll, 199.
[57] Deck, 73.
[58] Carroll, 181.
[59] Bréhier, 174–81; Pistorius, 68; Carroll, 180.

is paradoxical in that it is the principle of evil, yet also the last and lowest stage of the procession from the Good.[60] Inge maintains that matter – which is the lowest degree and that which is most widely separated from the Absolute, with nothing below it but "absolute non-entity" – was created, but not in time.[61] For Trouillard, matter is needed by the Good and proceeds from it. Although "total indetermination", it is nonetheless "integrated into the total process".[62] Finally, O'Brien – perhaps the chief proponent of Plotinus' monism when it comes to the origin of matter – maintains that it is in order to prevent dualism that Plotinus derives even matter from the One. Thus in II.4(12).2, he states that if matter were not derived from a principle prior to itself, there would, by implication, be more than one first principle and the relationship between these plural first principles would be the result of chance. Thus O'Brien concludes that it is to prevent such dualism and have the universe depend on a single first principle that even matter, which is utter evil, is derived from the One – but the way matter derives from the One will be "carefully circumscribed".[63] For O'Brien, even in chapters like I.8(51).14, where the generation of matter appears hypothetical, the unstated implication is that soul did generate matter.[64] Likewise Deck gives instances of a monistic generation of matter, pointing out that the closest Plotinus comes to saying that Intellect causes matter is his indirect suggestion in II.4(12).8 that Intellect is prior to matter and his point in V.8(31).7 that matter is the last of forms, where all form is in Intellect or dependent on it. Plotinus regards matter as a product of Intellect in that it is the end result of the "devolution" from Intellect.[65]

According to the third position, the question of the origin of matter is held to be meaningless, since matter is nothing at all. As Carroll notes, Carbonara – who is the most forceful among scholars who uphold this stance (others being Murray and Katz) – maintains that Plotinus rejects dualism, but this does not mean that matter is part of the monistic overflow. Matter is neither a creation of the One, nor an independent reality in the Plotinian universe. It is pure negation.[66]

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[60] *Ennead I*, xxiv.

[61] Inge, 137, 144, continues to say that matter was created of necessity, in order that the "will-activities of Soul and Spirit might become actualities".

[62] J. Trouillard, *La procession Plotinienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaries de France, 1955), 15.

[63] As O'Brien notes, Numenius, whose philosophy foreshadowed that of Plotinus, asserts that matter was not derived from the supreme principle. See O'Brien, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", 181.

[64] O'Brien, *Plotinus on the Origin of Matter*, 22. On this same passage Carroll, 199, suggests a very "remote possibility, if not impossibility" that soul is the producer of matter.

[65] Deck, 103–4.

[66] Carroll, 180.

Conclusion

In Plotinus' thought, time and the world of sense are generated by what may be a quasi-demiurgic soul, which serves merely as its immediate maker, but remains dependent for its being and fecundity on Intellect, characterized by Plotinus as the key demiurge, notwithstanding its silent, self-contained, non-reckoning repose. A more wide-ranging vision of Plotinus' cosmology – based on myriad passages from the *Enneads* – would suggest that nature and then matter must first exist, in order for cosmology proper to ensue. Soul must first generate nature as the lowest aspect of the World Soul and then, availing of a pre-existing matter, make the cosmos with a fecundity filtered through nature. As a "decorated corpse", matter – even if it appears as the last trace or sediment of a monistic procession from the One – remains almost dualistically severed from the very world of ensouled bodies that draw from it. Where matter and the cosmos are concerned, there lingers an unavoidable anomaly between the emanative order and ontological rank. These broad strokes of Plotinian cosmology are derived at the risk of imputing too great a tidiness on a dialogical work like the *Enneads* – a work so nuanced and subtle, it ought not to be caught in a net of superficial and simplistic cogency.

PART III
The Cosmological Scene

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Chapter 8

The Making of the World of Sense in the *Enneads*

Unlike the genesis of time, the begetting of the world of sense appears not only in III.7(45).11–13, but several, somewhat conflicting accounts scattered across the expanse of the *Enneads*. In Porphyry's chronology, most of these precede III.7(45), but a few are subsequent late treatises. All these need to be reduced to broad motifs and III.7(45).11 studied in their context. Soul's making of the world of sense conforms largely to the *poietic* norms of Plotinian emanation – that a primary activity of the progenitor contemplates its prior while its secondary activity, iconic with respect to the first, flows downwards and generates a progeny – but with this key difference. Unlike the One and Intellect, which produce silently, without exteriorization – soul does not abide in itself. It declines and as Deck notes, soul's declination comprises the projection of lower "parts" from itself – which serve to enform matter into bodies – such that the immobility of soul gets "compromised". This compromise indicates a "relaxation" of the requirements of *poiesis*.[1]

With the exception of III.2(47).2 and V.8(31).7 – where Plotinus minimizes the role of soul in the making of the universe – typically, a higher soul remains rapt in the contemplation of Intellect while a lower soul descends, to transform matter to body, by imbuing the *logoi* upon the matter of the sense-world. As Sinnige notes, the Gnostic illumination of darkness gets corrected in Plotinus' statement that the entire soul does not come down – "her best part 'stays above', receiving the creative light from her Father". This "recurrent stress" by Plotinus on the soul's better part always "staying above" is described by Sinnige as a reaction against the "desperate Gnostic theory of soul being completely drowned in matter and evil".[2] This apportionment of tasks between the two levels of soul expresses at once, the division of labor between the two activities of soul, as also the two directions in which *logos* moves.[3] This is the archetypal script – yet one hardly obdurate. Plotinus allows for subtle disparities and nuances. In his assorted accounts, the higher contemplative soul is termed varyingly, intellective soul or "as much of it as

[1] J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 42.

[2] Th.G. Sinnige, *Six Lectures on Plotinus and Gnosticism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 73.

[3] See Chapter 6 of this book.

is only Intellect"(IV.7(2).13), "great soul" (V.1(10).2) and "Universal Soul" (III.9(13).3), while the soul that descends ranges from "every soul" (V.1(10).2) and "power of growth", which extends to plants (III.4(15).1 and V.2(11).1), to "partial soul" (III.9(13).3). At one extreme we have III.2(47).2 and V.8(31).7, where Intellect can make the world of sense directly – without the mediation of soul. At the other, "every soul" (V.1(10).2) and "man" *qua* individual soul (V.8(31).7) can make the "whole". Given these irreconcilable differences, it becomes imperative to examine Plotinus' myriad accounts of the *poiesis* of the sense-world and reduce these to four modes – Intellect makes the sense-world through parts of soul, nature, matter, and directly, without any mediation of soul.[4] A sample of passages exemplifying these modes are studied in four sections: (1) Intellect Makes through Parts of Soul, (2) Intellect Makes through Soul and Nature, (3) Intellect Makes through "Every Soul", Purified "Man", Soul, World Soul, or Directly, and (4) How the Ensouled Body arises from Matter – a Sketch.

Intellect Makes through Parts of Soul

In chapters preceding III.7(45) – IV.7(2).13, V.2(11).1, III.9(13).3, IV.3(27).6, 9–10, and III.8(30).5 – Intellect makes the world of sense through parts of soul. There are significant variations among these passages and the broad *poietic* norms established in the generation of real beings is followed only to some extent. While in IV.7(2).13 there are two or more levels of soul, in IV.3(27).10 there are two activities or "powers" of soul – the first entitative activity "belonging" to and "remaining" within soul and the second iconic activity flowing down to "form something else". There are variations also in whether soul weakens and declines towards inferiors upon making or abides in itself in imitation of priors. In IV.7(2).13, the descended soul becomes isolated when it wants to direct a part of the All. In IV.3(27).6, only the individual species souls decline to the "depths" even though they do not make, but only veer towards the things already made by the World Soul. This senior "sister" does not decline at all, but abides in itself and contemplates Intellect as a whole as it makes. In V.2(11).1, soul extends downwards by desiring its inferior, thus producing another degree of being – the life-principle in plants – while the part before this soul abides in itself. In III.9(13).3, the "partial soul" becomes seemingly more indefinite when it makes matter.

IV.7(2).13: Here a higher, intellective soul – "as much of it as is only Intellect" – follows the *poietic* norms set by priors, remaining eternally engaged in intellectual life and unaffected – it "stays there forever without being affected".

[4] For the involvement of matter in the making of the universe see also Chapter 7 of this book.

Thus unlike III.7(45).11, here soul does not decline towards its progeny. What descends is something lower, contiguously below Intellect and burdened by desire. It desires to impart "order and beauty" to matter in accordance with the noetic pattern it "sees" in Intellect. As in III.7(45).11, the lower soul's desire here is ultimately for autonomy from Intellect, for it "strains" towards the sense-world that it is eager to make. Like the hypostasis soul in III.7(45).11, whose unquiet power also seeks to "transfer" what it "sees" in the intelligible realm, this descended soul wants to make in accordance with what it "sees" in Intellect.

The descended soul in this chapter is *as if* "pregnant by the intelligibles and laboring to give birth", or filled with the *logoi* as a result of "seeing" or contemplating the archetypal pattern in Intellect. Despite this direct noetic vision, which should fetch some fecundity, the "as if" might connote a quasi-fecundity, for this vision is far weaker than the full contemplation by intellective soul. The *logoi* derived by this descending soul may no longer be the original ones, as is the case with the *logoi* of the "last soul" in II.3(52).17. The descended soul here is "eager to make" and "constructs" the world, thus establishing desire, rather than an overflow of plenitude, as the cause leading to its making of the world. This expresses the seminal tension between the force of emanative decree and the necessity that governs it and that of desire and will (*boulêsis*) and the freedom that governs these – a tension that recurs throughout the procession of the many from the One. On the one hand, emanative necessity compels soul, so that – irrespective of its desire – it cannot help but impart a mimetic order and beauty to matter. On the other hand, it does so impelled by *tolmatic* eagerness.

The descended soul or lower part of the hypostasis soul, seems to be a particular soul, and not the World Soul, for this accompanies it: "And, straining towards the sense-world by its eagerness, along with the whole of the soul of the universe it transcends what it directs and shares in the care of the All." Already individuated by desire, it becomes still more individuated when it is isolated by its desire to direct a mere part of the All and "comes to be in that part in which it is" – indicating a mode of individuation of individual species souls from the genus, quite different from those in IV.3(27).2 and III.9(13).1. That it is thus "straining" towards the sense-world should weaken it – but Plotinus does not explicitly state so. However in IV.8(6).4, souls are weakened when they isolate themselves from the All for "a long time" and are thwarted from their contemplation of Intellect. They get individuated from their unity with the noetic "universal soul", when stung by *tolmatic* expressions of autonomy. They change from the whole to being a part and "belonging to themselves". "As if" tired of their prior unity, they become individuated further, or "each go to their own".[5]

[5] Yet, as Deck, 38, notes, this descent is at once free *and* necessary. It is free because it is due to its own nature, but necessitated on account of the "necessary law of its own nature".

V.2(11).1: Here, the hypostasis soul adheres partially to the archetypal *poiesis* of Plotinian emanation. Like Intellect, the hypostasis soul too has a dual movement. Through its first upward movement it "looks to its source", receives its form as soul and is perfected, or "filled"– presumably with the *logoi*. This movement is also its first, substantial activity and *logos*, which engenders its "going forth to another opposed movement" or the down-flow of its second, iconic activity and *logos*. This latter generates, as the hypostasis soul's image and first progeny – not matter, as in III.9(13).3 – but "sensation and the principle of growth in plants", expressed in III.4(15).1 as "the power of growth which extends also to plants". Breaking with the exemplary silence of its priors, soul does not abide unchanged when it generates – "it is moved and so brings forth an image". In so moving or exteriorizing itself, soul loses power. Thus, the recalcitrant motion of the hypostasis soul in III.7(45).11, which stirred, moving time along with it, is anticipated in this earlier work. However unlike III.7(45).11, soul's motion here is not *polupragmatic*. All it indicates is soul's desire for its inferior, but Plotinus does not stipulate any restlessness of soul as the cause of its exteriorization

Unlike IV.7(2).13 and III.9(13).3, here Plotinus does not begin explicitly with two levels of soul. The activities of soul and their corresponding *logoi* are not apportioned to a higher and lower soul. In fact, there is here something of a continuum: "Nothing is separated or cut off from that which is before it." This is a quasi-decline. Higher soul, which depends on Intellect, "seems to" descend down to plants. Yet it also actually "does reach so far" for "the life-principle in plants belongs to it". Despite such a seeming continuum, Plotinus ends this chapter with a distinction between higher and lower soul consonant with the two activities of soul. Soul is not entirely in plants, but it has "come to be in plants" by a progenitive extension. By veering towards or desiring its inferior it has "extended itself down to their level and produced another degree of being by that extension". In so desiring its inferior it must implicitly weaken. Thus, even the higher soul or "part before this", which is "immediately dependent on Intellect", does not remain fully noetic. It "leaves Intellect alone" and abides "in itself", or engages in a self-contemplation. Yet, this cannot mean a severance from Intellect. Despite its obvious weakening, caused by its desiring its inferior, soul cannot detach from Intellect – or else it will not be soul. Thus Deck's point, that the descent of soul in Plotinus is a "metaphor", remains validated in this chapter.[6]

III.9(13).3: Here, the contemplative and generative aspects of soul are apportioned explicitly and neatly between two levels of soul. The hypostasis soul, soul-genus, or higher "universal soul", (*pasa psuchê*) abides "always above" with Intellect "where it is natural for it to be", while a "partial" soul, which "meets reality" when it rises towards priors, encounters "non-existence" when it declines towards posteriors. Commentators have disputed the meaning of this "partial soul".

[6] Deck, 114.

As Deck notes, its identity is not obvious. Paraphrasing Bréhier, he claims that the latter takes it to mean "a part of the soul, presumably a part of the Soul of the All". However, as Deck adds, it could also mean the individual soul. He points out further that there are "difficulties" with either interpretation.[7] O'Brien, ties this "partial soul" to the soul "which comes to be in plants" in the "companion passage" III.4(15).1 – both generate that which is lacking in definition. This "partial soul's" indefiniteness here should correspond to the weakening self-extension of the World Soul in III.7(45).11.

This lower soul is engaged in what Deck describes as a "two-step" production of body. In the first, this "partial soul" "goes towards" itself and makes "the non-existent" as the indistinct image of itself. Its indefiniteness reflects the paucity or nebulosity of the "partial" soul itself. O'Brien holds this darkened, irrational image to be sensible matter.[8] Deck too holds this "non-existent" to be matter, a secondary image, or image of an image. The lower soul itself is an image of the higher soul. Its second *indefinite* image, or the "produced image of the lower soul", bereft of Intellect and *logos*, is matter. In the second step, the "partial" soul "looks" at this matter with a second glance and forms it into body. As in V.2(11).1 and III.7(45).11, here too, making entails weakening or loss of form – the "partial" soul as if walks on "emptiness" and becomes more indefinite or gains multiplicity as it makes matter. As Deck notes, this "denigration" of soul, by its close association with matter or body is noteworthy, because it is taken as the condition of the generation of body.[9] This weakening, which does not affect the higher soul, devolves upon the "partial soul", for it veers towards matter, its inferior and progeny – but its descent is complete only in the second step when it "goes into" enformed matter "rejoicing", for until then it is "in its own world" even though it has already become indefinite.

IV.3(27).6: Unlike "every soul" in V.1(10).2, here the "soul of each individual" has not made the universe – although it can – for it too has all the *logoi*, or "all things in itself", insofar as it has "the same form" as the World Soul. Yet, it is not disengaged. As in IV.7(2).13, here too "particular souls" direct each a part of the universe. Plotinus begins this chapter by asking why the "Soul of the All" (*pantos psuchê*) or World Soul made the universe and not the consubstantial individual species souls. The answer lies in the seniority of the former. Notwithstanding its consubstantiality, the World Soul is clearly established as the senior sister – it remains in unity with soul-genus when donning its body and

[7] *Ibid*., 45, note 10.

[8] D. O'Brien, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 181–2. See O'Brien, 182–3 for significant differences between the way soul generates matter here and the way Intellect, Soul, and even intelligible matter are generated directly or indirectly from the One.

[9] Deck, 44–5.

contemplates Intellect as a whole, depending more closely on priors, thus attaining greater power. By contrast, individual souls, though consubstantial, have less power and arrive late on a scene that is, by now, prepared by their senior sister. They contemplate only their partial intellects, appear on the scene after body is already in existence and receive their allotted parts – all this under the aegis of their "sister soul" which is already ruling "as if" she had already prepared their bodies or "dwellings" for them. This is echoed in II.9(33).18, where "our houses" or bodies have been built for us by our "good sister soul" which has "great power to work without any toil or trouble". The power of the World Soul is indisputable, for it achieves what even its genus does not in V.2(11).1 – it abides in itself when it makes, quite as much as the One and Intellect abide in themselves. The "itself" in which it abides comprises priors and in so abiding, it contemplates its priors. Unlike the hypostasis soul in V.2(11).1, the "partial soul" in III.9(13).3, and the hypostasis soul and "World Soul" in III.7(45).11, subject to a *polupragmatic* or restless principle, here the World Soul does not forfeit power. Only the particular souls do. In fact, the World Soul plays the role of the higher intellective soul, rapt in contemplation of Intellect in passages like III.9(13).3, while the particular souls represent the lower soul which descends. Yet, unlike these other passages, here the labor of making the world is not divided between higher and lower soul. The World Soul contemplates Intellect with its full power as well as makes, abiding unchanged as the things it makes come to it. The particular souls, largely redundant to the *poietic* process, merely decline, or depart "to the depths" as they "themselves go to the things".

IV.3(27).9: As Deck notes, here, unlike III.9(13).3, the World Soul, or Soul of the All, which makes the universe, neither stumbles nor becomes indefinite.[10] Plotinus does not suggest any weakening, although the World Soul "sees" the darkness of matter at the fringe of the "great light" or "firelight" that shines from it. This light may be comparable to the luminosity in III.2(47).16, which is the *logos* of the universe that Plotinus describes as "a sort of outshining" of both intellect and soul – perhaps mimetic with respect to the "outshining" from the One in V.3(49).12. Here, using Deck's translation, the World Soul again uses two steps to produce the universe as it does in III.9(13).3 – "If body were not, the soul would not proceed … Now the soul … is like a huge light, which, shining to its uttermost limits, becomes darkness. The soul, seeing this darkness, which it has made subsist, forms this darkness". Thus in this translation, the World Soul first makes matter – for the light "becomes" darkness – and then forms body from matter by "seeing" this darkness.

Returning to Armstrong's translation of this analysis of "first communication of soul with body", or passage from "bodilessness to any kind of body", the World Soul's contemplation of matter, by imbuing it with the *logoi*, occurs by emanative

[10] *Ibid*., 45.

decree. Soul sees and informs matter, the peripheral "darkness", or "substrate for form", because "it was not lawful for that which borders on soul to be without its share of formative principle, as far as that was capable of receiving it". That it is thus "lawful" or decreed for matter to receive form may explain why the World Soul does not weaken, even though it looks down towards matter – and we know from I.8(51).4 that matter "infects with its own evil that which is not in it but only directs its gaze to it". That the World Soul remains unabated is demonstrable, for it is merely present to a universe, which it masters and possesses, but does not belong to. Thus the universe is immersed in a soul that sustains it, like a live net in a sea it is unable to "make its own". Likened to the shadow of soul, the universe extends as far as soul goes, limited only by its *logos* and form. This "shadow" is commensurable with the *logos*, which comes from the soul. This *logos*, in turn, takes directions from the form it derives from – it makes a size as large as that stipulated by its corresponding form.

IV.3(27).10: Here, soul – presumably still the World Soul – adheres strictly with the *poietic* script of its priors. Instead of a division into higher and lower soul, the division here is between soul's two powers. Plotinus describes the essential dual activities of soul in terms of their powers. Copying Intellect, which in V.2(11).1, pours forth as its secondary activity a "multiple power", one primary "power", intrinsic to soul, belongs to it and "remains within it", while another secondary power "goes out to form something else".[11] Plotinus describes the work of soul – the power or activity within it and that flowing out – as something *awake*, so that soul can enliven that which is not alive on its own. Soul imparts to the body it makes, the image of the *logos* it has. What it thus bequeaths is a mere image of life. Perhaps body receives these images of *logos* and life only discursively for body is subject to "this after that". From IV.4(28).16 we know that unlike soul, in which, "all the rational forming principles are present at once", in the things made by soul "there is no simultaneity … though there is togetherness in the rational forming principles". Material things are thus subject to "this after that".

III.8(30).5: The "soul prior to nature" in III.8(30).5 is perhaps the "prior soul with a stronger life" in III.8(30).4, which is the parent of nature. If so, then this should be either soul-genus or the World Soul. Armstrong interprets "my mother", in nature's proclamation, "what happens to me is what happens to my mother and the beings that generated me" (III.8(30).4), as the "higher soul".[12] However, as Deck points out, it is uncertain which soul Plotinus means in Chapter 5. While

[11] Even soulless things obey this motif – their intrinsic primary power lies "asleep" in them and their secondary power goes out and makes a likeness of itself. It makes that which is capable of being affected (IV.3(27).10).

[12] *Plotinus Ennead III*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 371.

"soul prior to nature" is particularly applicable to the higher part of the World Soul, it applies also to the individual human soul, which in its highest part is superior to nature. Deck expounds further on this latter. It would not help to point out, he suggests, that the highest part of the human soul, which is its *nous*, is a contemplation superior to nature, for in this passage the "highest part" in question is not *nous*, but the discursive part designated as superior to nature. Deck observes rightly that phrases like "love of learning" and "seeking", or "spirit of enquiry", which Plotinus ascribes to this soul prior to nature, cannot apply to the World Soul, for this never *seeks* to know – it knows. Thus Deck concludes that this soul which learns is not the "eternally fixed World Soul", but the human soul. If Deck is right, this "highest part" of the historical human soul cannot be at its species level, for this latter ought to be beyond the lower discursive level, insofar as it is noetic. Like the World Soul, it too knows – and does not seek to know. Moreover, the species level is not so much a *part* of the historical human soul as its antecedent. At this point, the only phrases Deck concedes could apply to the World Soul are those that follow immediately – "its birth-pangs from the knowledge it attains and its fullness". This fullness indicates the completion gained upon receiving form as a result of contemplation of Intellect. It also means that as in II.3(52).18, here too Soul is filled to the "brim" with the *logoi*.

Plotinus then refers to a soul with the usual two parts, indicative perhaps of its dual activities. The first higher part is intellective – "always filled and illuminated by the reality above". It "remains There" and does not descend. Deck interprets this as the rational part of the human soul. Referring to V.3(49).3, he points out that the rational is the "highest faculty properly *in us*", by which we judge images coming from sensation using the rule given by Intellect. Deck reminds us that Intellect itself is not among the parts of our soul. It is ours only when we use it. Deck thus attributes to Plotinus a distinction between the rational part of the soul proper to human knowing and the "abiding wisdom" of the World Soul and reiterates his earlier point that the soul in question here in III.8(30).5 is the human soul.

Yet he also admits a certain ambiguity about the nature of soul in this chapter, but does not consider the species antecedent of the human soul. He returns to the World Soul, claiming that despite the significance attached to the aforementioned phrases, like "love of learning", it is still "not perfectly certain" that Plotinus means the human soul. Some phrases in subsequent lines indicating the omnipresence of soul point to the World Soul. In Deck's translation these are: "the soul (or lower part thereof) reaches everywhere and there is no place where it is absent"; and "since then the soul becomes everywhere and there is nowhere where its act is not …" Deck also considers the possibility that here Plotinus means the omnipresence of the individual soul within the individual body. His conclusion regarding this chapter is that we cannot be sure which soul Plotinus is speaking of.

Yet he points out that in the subsequent chapter (III.8(30).6) Plotinus refers clearly only to the human soul.[13]

Notwithstanding puzzling phrases on soul's "love of learning" and "spirit of enquiry", which certainly do not apply to the World Soul or its genus, the soul with the parts in this chapter may implicate the whole genus-species structure of soul, with the first part being the hypostasis soul or soul-genus and the part that descends the World Soul, which is clearly "not equal" to the former, although consubstantial. That this lower part is perhaps the World Soul is indicated by its silent making – "all goes on noiselessly, for there is no need of any obvious and external contemplation or action". It is also indicated by its contrasting, exteriorized progeny (perhaps nature) – "that which comes after it, that which contemplates in a more external way". Yet in this chapter what "makes everywhere" is not explicitly nature, but soul. Presumably what it makes is the world of sense.

Intellect Makes through Soul and Nature

In Inge's rendering of Plotinus' thought, an unconscious nature imbues upon matter a "reflexion" of the forms it receives from above, thus drawing body out of matter. The four elements are the direct product of nature (IV.4(28).14). In this context Inge cites Schelling to describe nature as a "sleeping Spirit" (*ein schlafender Geist*),[14] but as Deck notes, to use this appellation for Plotinus' nature would be "excessive, another bit of romantic-idealist poetry". Rather, Plotinus' nature is "*like* a man asleep". Yet, nature is peculiarly awake insofar as it has, as Deck notes, a kind of knowing power, although it is possible that its contemplation is "less than conscious" for it is a "weak dilution of *Nous*", proximate to matter. Deck notes further that although nature is, in Plotinus' words, "more towards the external" – in comparison with the higher part of the World Soul and in the sense that it tends more to produce the external – it is not "more towards the external" with respect to its object of contemplation. Thus its "contemplating-producing" remains *poiesis*, rather than *praxis*. Copying Intellect and soul, nature produces because of the "vestigial" strength of its contemplation. The silent contemplation of nature is directed neither above, nor below, but at itself.

Nature is a knowing power that already possesses internally its object of knowledge – that is, itself. Nature is not like discursive reason, which has to seek out the objects of knowledge it does not yet possess. Thus nature can produce the sense-world as a work of contemplation. It is akin to Intellect and in its self-possession, ironically superior to the World Soul and the hypostasis soul, for these

[13] Deck, 49–51, 69.

[14] W.R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, vol. I (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 155.

can exteriorize when they produce. Thus the opening lines of III.8(30).5 are paradoxical. As Deck notes, we learn that the soul prior to nature is fuller than nature, is more at rest, and has more than nature. Yet it loves learning and searches. This should make it inferior to nature, which is a contemplative producer that already has its object and has no need to learn or search, thus leading to Deck's question – is soul a better "contemplative producer" even though it does not yet have its object?

Yet, there are passages where nature has no knowledge at all. Thus in II.3(52).17, what makes at the level of nature is neither thought, nor vision, but a blind power that can act and "manipulate" matter, but cannot know. Something other than the "power of growth and generation" gives it what it needs for this making. Again, in IV.4(28).13, wisdom is first and nature last, because nature does not know, but only makes.

Nature's contemplation is unquestionably inferior to that of soul and Intellect. Thus contemplation ascends from nature to soul and from soul to Intellect, growing progressively more intimate and united to contemplators (III.8(30).8). As Deck notes, nature is an intelligible form, distinct from the visible form which proceeds as a *logos* from it. Yet it is the "most enfeebled" of real things and not exactly a real being, for the contemplation which it has and is – like that of a sleeping or dreaming man – is inferior to that appropriate to a real being. However, as Deck notes, insofar as nature's contemplation is intellectual and thus productive, it is Intellect. Thus, to say that the sense-world is the direct product of Intellect and that it is the product of nature's contemplation, are to say the same thing.[15]

Nature is a mirror image of soul, given by soul to the body (I.1(53).8) and its product is an overflow from its silent contemplation. Reflecting the weakness of nature's contemplation, its progeny, the sense-world, is still more exteriorized, disseminated, and inferior enough to be visible. Nature is a soul, which gives the body a "trace of soul", "shapes" it, "forms" it, and "makes" it. The "qualified body" thus comes into being "from" nature, which exists prior to it and is distinct from it (IV.4(28).20).

As Wagner notes, there are two dimensions to nature's operation or function: first, there is nature's "distributive ubiquity", or the "presence of its unifying power within every thing and process in our cosmos"; second, there is nature's own "*primary* unity" as the "unifying power of our cosmos as a whole". These two dimensions, which are not opposed to one another, are brought together by Plotinus in II.2(14).3 and VI.7(38).7.[16]

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[15] Deck, 65–6, 68–71, 113.

[16] M.F. Wagner, "Plotinus, Nature and the Scientific Spirit", in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, M.F. Wagner (ed.) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 309–11.

V.9(5).6: Here Plotinus refers to a spermatic definition of nature: "Some people call the soul in the seed 'nature'". As Armstrong notes, this is Plotinus' allusion to the Stoic doctrine from which he develops his own notion of nature as the lowest immanent form of soul. Nature starts from antecedent principles – from "above", from "the principles before it", like "light from fire" – and "flashes out" to shape matter into body, by giving it a share in its own *logoi*. Armstrong also notes that here Plotinus may be addressing oft repeated Epicurean objections to the divine creation of the physical universe, when he tells us that nature can "shape" matter without "pushing" it or using all that "levering" (cf. III.8(30)2) "they keep on talking about".[17] The "sort of outshining" of both Intellect and soul in the later III.2(47).16, which is the *logos* of the universe and the "great light" shining from the World Soul, fringed by the darkness of matter in IV.3(27).9, are both reminiscent of the analogy of the "light from fire" applied to nature here – that nature starts from priors, like "light from fire". The suddenness implied in nature's "flashing out", although non-temporal and eternal, perhaps indicates the depth of declination required of nature in order for it to make the realm of process. This suddenness is echoed in V.8(31).7, where the "image or imprint" of real beings appears "suddenly" from the latter.

III.8(30).2: Here, Plotinus echoes some of the ideas from the earlier V.9(5).6 and traces a tiered ordering of *logoi* deduced from the universal antecedent of soul, reaching down to the visibility of the world of sense. Nature makes – not mechanistically, by levering (cf. V.9(5).6, V.8(31).7), indicative of planning, determinism and materialism – but by contemplation. "What kind of thrusting or levering can produce this rich variety of colours and shapes of every kind?" Plotinus asks.[18] The power that makes in nature must stay unmoved – in fact, "no part of nature is in motion". All that moves is matter. Impassible matter – which is destitute of qualities – is the only raw material that *underlies* nature, comes to nature, is worked on by nature, and *moves* by "becoming of", or reflecting different qualities without possessing them, when given form by a *logos*. As in III.8(30).5, where nature, in its possession of its object of knowledge appears superior to its prior soul, which seeks and learns, here again nature appears superior to soul. Although soul is the less exteriorized prior of nature, nature manages to conform to higher *poietic* norms by remaining unmoved when it makes, whereas soul – its ontological prior – moves when it makes, cannot abide unchanged and thus fails to meet these standards.

Towards the end of Chapter 2, Plotinus establishes a tiered ordering of *logoi* that emanate down from nature. In Deck's interpretation these are: (1) nature,

[17] *Plotinus Ennead V*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 302–3, notes 1–2.

[18] As Armstrong suggests, here Plotinus may have in mind a type of crude Epicurean criticism of Plato. See *Plotinus Ennead III*, 363, note 2.

which itself is Intellect's *logos*; (2) nature's offspring – the immovable "another principle" made by nature, which gives "something" (the form) to the "substrate" of matter; (3) the "living" *logos* which "makes in that which comes into being", or, in Deck's words, "produces (acts) in the constituted being"; and (4) the "inert" or "dead", last *logos*, incapable of making another, which, as Deck puts it, is "referred to the visible form". As Deck notes, this interpretation allows this passage to answer a question asked in the earlier IV.4(28).14 – "The form which nature gives to the thing which it fashions must be considered different from nature itself; but we must enquire whether there is still an intermediary between this form and nature" (Deck's translation). In Deck's interpretation of III.8(30).2, (2) is the "intermediary" in this quotation from IV.4(28).14. Moreover, in the form that nature gives to the thing it fashions, Plotinus distinguishes the living (3) and the dead (4).

Deck proposes a second, more probable, alternative interpretation of this series of *logoi* in Chapter 2, in terms of propagation – the production of one animal or plant by another by imparting *logos*. In this interpretation, nature, the "immobile, living *logos* of the generator", would produce its brother – a *logos* akin to it and having the same power as it – the living *logos* of the generated: "The living logos (nature) of the generator would produce the visible form of the generator, while the living logos (nature) of the generated would produce the visible form of the generated".[19] Wagner cites a "double *logos*" – the first being nature *qua* Intellect's *logos* and the second, the offspring of nature or the *logos* finally given to matter. Regarding Plotinus' claim – that this offspring of nature, which is the final *logos* because it is "dead and unable to produce another", produces visible shape instead – Wagner suggests that it is meant to distinguish between natural processes and their visible manifestations to human sense experience.[20]

[19] Deck, 120–121.

[20] Wagner, 296–7, cites, as an example, the distinction between "the process or activity of a tree growing and the visible or sensible form(s) in which this process manifests itself to human sense experience". Nature's offspring is, strictly, the tree's growth process as it occurs in the natural world, while the observable alterations in the tree's size constitute an image of the tree's growth and is the venue through which the natural process manifests itself to our sense-experience. The process of growth in itself is an offspring and image of a prior *logos* – nature. In producing its own visible form or manifesting itself to our sense experience – nature's *logos* (the tree's growth process) is dead, since a true and living *logos* always produces a further living *logos* as its image. But nature's *logos* does not do so. All it produces is a visible form, which is not a further *logos*, but a sensory phenomenon.

However, this threatens a "vicious regress". To formulate (4) in a way that avoids this – that nature might be a dead *logos*, since a living *logos* must produce another living *logos* whereas nature produces a dead *logos* – Wagner qualifies the deadness in (4) to "more dead than alive". Nature's life is so weak and far removed from archetypal life that its offspring is "more dead than alive". Wagner also points out that in claiming that nature's offspring *qua logos* produces its own visible form, Plotinus is not alluding to physical processes, but to the

III.8(30).3: Here, Plotinus asserts again that nature does not reason. Nature is a knowing power in eternal and internal possession of its object – which is itself. When it contemplates itself, it does not "research" into what it has in itself. Thus it does not have the contemplation that comes from reasoning. Unlike research, which entails not yet possessing, nature already possesses and thus makes – "just because it possesses, it also makes". In fact, making and being are one and the same for nature, for nature's *poietic* power is "co-extensive" with its being – or with what it is. Thus nature is contemplation, object of contemplation and *logos* – and it makes inasmuch as it is all three. Nature makes insofar as it possesses, or it is as contemplation that nature makes. As O'Meara notes, this identification of "making" with "being" in a producing principle has been suggested by Plotinus before in earlier passages like IV.3(27).10, but it is exploited more fully in III.8(30) and V.8(31).[21] In IV.3(27).10 soul makes without craft, in accordance with its "essential nature" or being, which is perhaps a reference to its first activity.

III.8(30).4: In its almost nonchalant response to the query as to why it makes, nature admonishes with a plea for silent comprehension, referring to its own *poietic* silence:"You ought not to ask, but to understand in silence, you, too, just as I am silent and not in the habit of talking". Such curiosity and questioning expresses, as it were, the very *polupragmatic* nature that nature avoids by remaining silent – by resisting exteriorization and abiding in itself as it produces. What the questioner should understand is the essence of nature's method of "contemplating-producing" – which is spelt out in this chapter. This is a method that remains *poiesis*, rather than *praxis*, for all nature does is contemplate and see in silence the object of contemplation that, as a result, comes to be "naturally". As nature contemplates, the "lines which bound bodies come to be", as if they fell from its contemplation. As Wagner clarifies, what immediately falls from nature's attempt at contemplation is not sensible form as such but "real activities, natural processes, or 'Becomings'".[22] Unlike geometers, who draw their figures while contemplating, nature does not premeditate even to this extent. It does not draw figures, or pre-think the lines that fall from its contemplation – hence the sheer silence of its contemplation.

Notwithstanding this commendable silence, nature's contemplation is *blurry*, thus connoting sleep. As Deck notes, in III.8(30) Plotinus makes "very limited claims" for nature's knowledge. Nature has only a "kind of self-perception" or in Deck's words – only a "*sort of* synesis, a *sort of* synesthesis". Nature does not have the kind of "understanding or perception" of "other beings". This would amount to

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"vertical (metaphysical) causes of sensible Becoming's Being" – such as the "intelligibility of the observed alterations in a tree's size in fact *being a process of growth*".

[21] D.J. O'Meara, "Gnosticism and the Making of the World in Plotinus", in *The Structure of Being and the Search for the Good* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 1998), 373.

[22] Wagner, 298.

comparing the consciousness of someone "fast asleep" to that of someone "awake". Deck notes further that if, as Plotinus says, nature's knowledge is asleep, this could mean that nature's contemplating is completely unconscious. Yet, given that knowledge in the exemplary Intellect is "completely self-conscious" and thus "completely conscious", no knowledge in his world is likely to be so "beclouded" as to be completely unconscious. Thus by comparing with sleep, Plotinus perhaps means to convey that nature's knowledge is close to unconsciousness. As Deck concludes, nature is a contemplation, a knowledge, but a "most obscure knowledge".[23]

Nature is the last stage in the vertical diminution of life that descends from Intellect – nature is "the offspring of a prior soul with a stronger life". In its dream-like, blurry, and weak self-contemplation, nature – itself an image of a prior, stronger contemplation – is at rest and produces a weak object – the sense-world. Though weak, this object remains the result of contemplation – and not action. As Wagner notes, the blurred and weak character of nature's contemplation also accounts for the limitations of Becoming – its "partiality and incompleteness as an image of Being".[24]

II.1(40).5: Here the "maker of the universe" – presumably Intellect – is above "heavenly soul" and "our souls". Heaven is everlasting because it is made and ruled by a better soul and out of better material compared to us and other living things of the earth.[25] This "heavenly soul" irradiates its image, which "so to speak flows" down to "make" the living things on earth. This immediate maker or "this kind of soul" – the image of "heavenly soul"– seems like the "last soul" or nature. Insofar as nature usually derives as the last or lowest part of the World Soul, the "heavenly soul" here must be the World Soul. In so making the living things of earth, this image of "heavenly soul" tries to imitate its prior – "the soul up there" – but fails, because it uses "worse bodies" for its making and works in a "worse place". The ingredients it uses for composition are perishable, thus conferring mortality to living things here. The ensouled bodies of earth are not as "effectively mastered" by this mediatory image of "heavenly soul", as if this latter had ruled them directly. Likewise, "we" are formed by "the soul given from the gods in heaven and heaven itself". This soul also governs our association with our bodies. The particular soul or "other soul, by which we are ourselves" is the cause of our well-being but not of our being. As in IV.3(27).6, it comes when our body is already in existence.

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[23] Deck, 69–72.

[24] Wagner, 304.

[25] *Plotinus Ennead II*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 7.

II.3(52).17: As Blumenthal notes, here as in the subsequent chapter, Plotinus writes as if there is no "intermediary" between Intellect and the Soul of the All or World Soul.[26] The World Soul is, as it were, contiguous to Intellect. Here, the ruling principle of soul makes by "manipulating" the "generative soul" in matter – where matter is first produced as the imperfect contribution of nature (or lowest soul) to the Whole. What manipulates is not reasoning, but the part of soul that possesses the *logoi*, which makes according to the forms. Its "making" amounts to giving "what it receives from Intellect". This "powerful" part of soul, which receives the forms from Intellect, is the World Soul. Here Plotinus describes a vertical hierarchy of power emanating from Intellect and ending with nature. Intellect "gives" to the "Soul of the All", "the one which comes next after Intellect" or World Soul. This in turn gives "from itself" to "the soul next after it". The giving in question amounts to "enlightening", for the World Soul "enlightens" and "impresses" form on this "last soul". Expressions like "lowest" soul, ascribed to the soul "next after" the World Soul, whose making can be hindered and whose contribution to the "Whole" is matter, indicate that this "last" soul must, as Inge suggests, be nature.[27]

Once it receives the *logoi*, this "last soul" makes instantly, "as if under orders". It has to make thus, like an automaton of its priors, for that which makes at the level of nature is a noetically blind power that simply manipulates matter – it does not know but only acts. It makes some things "without hindrance", but meets with impedances in the case of "worse ones" for its power is weakened. The former are probably ensouled bodies with more form than matter, while the latter are perhaps those in which form is minimal and matter dominates. Notwithstanding its absolute compliance, this "last soul" cannot make according to the forms it receives, since its power to make is "derived" and it is filled with *logoi* which are not the original ones. Thus in this chapter, it is not the exteriorized souls which weaken, but nature's power to make and its filtered *logoi*, which are diluted, on account of having trickled down through conduits. Nature makes a compensatory contribution of its own, which Plotinus ranks as "obviously worse" – presumably in the order of all the things it makes, including the "worse ones" that result from its hindered making. This "very imperfect" contribution to the Whole by the "lowest" soul – as Plotinus describes nature – is the "bitter and embittering" "sort of sediment" of prior realities – the matter of the sense-world.

II.3(52).18: Here Plotinus retains the vertical hierarchy of power from the previous chapter – with the demiurgic Intellect at the helm, then the World Soul or "the soul which comes next" contiguous to Intellect, and finally nature – the "trace" and "last and lowest expression" of the World Soul, the "productive

[26] H.J. Blumenthal, "Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul in Plotinus", in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 58.

[27] See Inge, 156.

principle that we are discussing", "the ultimate maker", "lower form of soul", and "third". Intellect gives to the World Soul "gifts" or *logoi*, whose diluted traces are in the "third". The division of labor here is between an intellective World Soul that never descends and nature, its trace. There is the usual two-way communion between Intellect and the World Soul. Intellect bequeaths "gifts" upon the World Soul while it contemplates Intellect. The World Soul contemplates the "best" – it "always" aspires to the "intelligible nature and to God". Thus it remains ever above nature as "that part of soul which is primarily filled from Intellect". Following Plotinus' usual *poietic* script, when the World Soul is "full" to the "brim", through its contemplation of Intellect or contemplation by its primary activity, it produces nature as its "trace". Here nature *qua* "third" is at rest, but also in motion, "incidentally in matter". The visible universe is irradiated as an image that is "always in process of being made" by nature *qua* "lower form of soul", to which the *logoi* flow eternally from an eternal Intellect and World Soul.

Intellect Makes through "Every Soul", Purified "Man", Soul, World Soul, or Directly

In V.1(10).2 and V.8(31).7, Plotinus implicates the individual soul in the making of the universe – but approaches this soul from opposite ends. In the former, "every soul" makes, perhaps at the *anterior* species level prior to the embodied historical level of the *eidôlon*, whereas in the latter, "man" must first rise from the historical state, or cease to be man and "come to belong" to the whole, before he can make the whole. Thus V.8(31).7, unlike V.1(10).2, involves a conscious ascent and purification of man in order for the sensible whole to be made. In V.1(10).2 "every soul" stands in need of purification, but only so that it can be fit for contemplating the "great soul". Here, in addition to the individual soul, Plotinus implicates also the World Soul in converting matter to body. In V.8(31).7 however, the World Soul is not implicated and in fact, Plotinus expresses indifference as to whether the ministrations of soul are even needed to irradiate the world of sense as the imprint of the Intelligible All. Unlike Plotinus' lyrical depiction in V.1(10).2, that in V.8(31).7 sounds archeological. Here, the sense-world comprises layers of forms imbued on lower layers, burying matter, which is described here as some sort of ultimate form.

In III.2(47).1–2 – which are subsequent to III.7(45).11 – Plotinus goes further than in V.8(31).7 and omits all mediation by soul. Intellect generates the universe, its less real image, absolutely directly. In Chapter 1 Plotinus merely posits Intellect as the cause of this universe and notes that the universe exists by means of Intellect, but does not detail quite how Intellect makes. But in Chapter 2, Intellect makes by emanating the *logos* "always" to matter. In both chapters, Intellect makes with its characteristic quietude. Like the One, it abides in itself and certainly does not decline, notwithstanding the declination in its *logos*.

V.1(10).2: Unlike the "soul of each individual" in IV.3(27).6, here, "every soul" is a progenitor. In IV.3(27).6, the "soul of each individual" can, but does not make the sense-world. By contrast, here, "every soul" "made" "all living things" by breathing "life"– or bestowing the *logoi* – into things nourished by the earth and the sea and the divine stars. It made the sun itself, and "this great heaven", which it adorned and operated in its orderly motion around itself. As a *poietic* essence "every soul" is eternal, for as Plotinus explains, citing Plato's *Phaedrus* (245C9), it "exists for ever because 'it does not depart from itself'".[28] It is in its immortality "more honourable" than its mortal progeny – the things it "adorns", "moves" and "makes live" – which "come into being or pass away" accordingly as soul grants them life or leaves them. So far, "every soul" sounds like the species antecedent of the historical individual soul.

Plotinus then speaks of "every soul's" contemplation of the "great soul"– presumably the hypostasis soul. Now, "every soul" is elevated from the historical *eidôlon* burdened with accretions. It has become worthy of contemplating and "established in quietude" by being "freed from deceit and the things that have bewitched the other souls". There is perhaps a tacit distinction here – between the species and the historical levels of "every soul" – with the separate tasks of making and contemplating divided between them. What makes is perhaps the eternal species level of *all* individual souls operating at their core level, or the level of the genus – the "every soul" anterior to the historical level – while what contemplates the "great soul" are *some* selected souls – only those "worthy to look" by being purified of accretions and returned through conscious *epistrophic* ascent to the consubstantial species level at which we are "that very same honourable thing which … was soul", as Plotinus concludes towards the end of this chapter. Like the "we" in III.7(45).11, here too perhaps the historical *eidôlon* is recounting through reason, how, in its capacity as species soul *qua* "every soul", it "granted life" to the universe.

The role of the World Soul in this chapter is perplexing. It is not the contemplative "another soul which is no small one" for it was neither "bewitched" nor in need of being freed from "deceit". Unlike this "every soul", the World Soul stands in no need of purification to qualify to "look" at the "great soul" – it is unconditionally rapt in the contemplation of the "great soul". Yet, the environ of the *corpus* of the soul "established in quietude" sounds like the cosmic body of the World Soul, exhorted by Plotinus to be quiet and at peace – for it includes the earth, sea, air and heaven.[29] But the *corpus* itself, or the "encompassing body and the body's raging sea", which Plotinus also enjoins to be quiet, should belong to the "every soul" – and not the World Soul – for the World Soul does not have the

[28] As Armstrong suggests, soul's cosmic activity here is inspired by *Phaedrus* (245C5ff.) and *Laws* X (895A5ff). See *Ennead V*, 14, note 1.

[29] As Armstrong notes, this passage is said to have inspired both St. Basil and St. Augustine. See *Ennead V*, 14–15, note 2.

"raging sea" or passions of the body. However, in the meditation that follows, Plotinus clearly implicates the World Soul. The quietened "every soul" is asked to "imagine" the quasi-inflow of what appears to be the World Soul – *as if* "flowing in from outside, pouring in and entering it everywhere and illuminating it".[30] The environment of the *corpus* of "every soul", now represented by a spatial "body of heaven", is given life, immortality and awakened from inertness – presumably by the World Soul, which guides it into everlasting motion, thus converting it into a "fortunate living being".[31] Plotinus adds that "before soul", this "heaven" was merely "the darkness of matter and non-existence", and citing the phrase used of Hades in *Iliad* (20.65), "what the gods hate". Only the World Soul could have such a nascent cosmic body, freshly converted from the darkness of matter. Thus the World Soul – not initially a part of the "every soul", which generates living things – is now infused into this chapter – as that which makes by transforming matter to body.

V.8(31).7: In this chapter, Plotinus departs from his usual *poietic* script wherein soul plays a significant role, for he minimizes the ministration of soul. He has two accounts of the making of the world: first by the intelligible All and second by the particular soul *qua* "man". Here "man" makes this All – neither prior to embodiment, nor as the *eidôlon* – but only when he has ceased to be man and "come to belong" to the whole. This indicates effort and ascent out of the historical state into the species level of soul.

As Armstrong notes, there is in this chapter an "immediate and intimate" relationship between the intelligible and sensible universes. Plotinus claims that "something like an imprint and image" of the realm of real being "suddenly" appears, through alternative modes of generation – *either* by the "direct action" of real being *or* with the "assistance" of soul – and Plotinus adds astonishingly that this makes no difference for the present discussion – or through a particular soul. The former mode is a direct communication of the sensible by the intelligible world, while the latter uses the mediation of soul and particular souls. As

[30] Plotinus' uses of "imagine" and "as if" are important, for the transition from matter to body has already occurred. "Heaven" has already been enlivened by soul – and all that the quietened soul is doing now is contemplating this event. It isn't as if body was first generated and then enlivened, for body could not exist unless enlivened by soul. Thus Plotinus first depicts heaven in terms of "body" – before soul, heaven was a "dead body, earth and water" – but then emends this to a depiction in terms of "matter" – "or rather the darkness of matter and non-existence" (V.1(10).2). Moreover, as Plotinus tells us in IV.3 (27).9, there never was a time when body and the universe were not ensouled, or matter not ordered. Matter is eternally ordered, for it precedes (logically) the appearance of time. The initial ensoulment of the universe and transformation of matter to body are eternal, for the universe, along with time, is engendered co-eternally.

[31] "Heaven" here is spatial, as in IV.3(27).15, 17. Until it receives light, life and guidance from soul and is ensouled, it is sheer matter.

Armstrong notes, soul in Plotinus' thought, never has a world of its own intermediate between the intelligible and the sensible worlds. It is usually a link between both worlds and belongs to both. But here, soul seems hardly needed even as a link.[32] Yet, soul is not redundant. In Deck's words, what Plotinus means in saying that the sensible world appears by the "proximity" of the intelligible, "*whether there is a ministration by soul or not*" – is "even though there is, in fact, a ministration by soul". Deck also adds that the "proximity" of the intelligible world must be understood non-spatially and the "sudden" appearance of its image, non-temporally, for the intelligible realm is "a-extended" and "a-temporal".[33]

The cause of the sense-world is not merely the proximity of the intelligible world, but its active communication of its image and imprint. The "direct action" of the intelligible comprises its extrusion of generative activity – reminiscent of III.2(47).2. Like the latter, where the *logos* of the universe flows directly from Intellect, here too, the "something like an imprint and image" of the realm of real being that "suddenly" appears is perhaps the iconic secondary activity and *logos* flowing from the intelligible realm. The catalytic power of the immediacy of the intelligible world, the purity of its presence before the "adulterated" world of sense and the utter dependence of the latter on the former coalesce to produce the non-spatial proximity and intimacy between the two realms. The emanation of the imprint and image from the intelligible world is the archetype for the process in III.8(30).4, by which, "the lines which bound bodies come to be", as if they "fell" from nature's contemplation.

Plotinus now turns to the particular soul he mentioned so cursorily, as a possible assistant to the *poietic* activity of the realm of real being. First, he cites a noetic "we" reminiscent of the pristine, incipient "we" of VI.4(22).14 and tells us that if "we" were "archetypes and real being and forms all at once" and if the form which makes down here were our real being, our "craftsmanship" would have the same toil-free "mastery". Citing Plato's *Phaedrus* (246C1–2), Plotinus then suggests that even "man" – when he ceases to be man – "walks on high and directs the whole universe". When he "comes to belong" to the whole – that is, the intelligible All wherein lies the seat of the unity of soul in soul-genus – he *makes* the whole *qua* sensible world. For "man" to thus cease to be man and come to belong to the whole, he must return to his origins in a reversal of the procession leading to his descent. To descend and be "man" he had to cease to be the All. And now, in order to cease to be man, the *eidôlon* must be purified of accretions. To make the world upon a return to noetic origins is fundamentally different from making it in the pre-embodied anterior state of unity in those origins. If the latter were true, the particular soul would not have to cease to be "man" for it would be at the pristine species level prior to the descent as "man". Unlike V.1(10).2, here

[32] *Ennead V*, 258, note 1.

[33] As Deck, 113, notes, in this passage Plotinus affirms the doctrine of III.6(26) and VI.4–5(22–23).

Plotinus ties man's *poietic* activity directly to what seems like a conscious ascent beyond the *eidôlon*. It isn't as if historical man is reasoning about an anterior species state in which he made the world, prior to the emergence of his first embodied state – as may be the case in V.1(10).2 and III.7(45).11. Unlike these chapters, here man's ascent out of the state of "man" is unavoidably *epistrophic*. Implicit here is a conversion and ascent out of the discursive historical state through conscious, yearning self-purification – for man *comes* to belong to the whole – that is, man *evolves* to the whole. However, Plotinus does not spell out this tacit ascent. Should "man" transcend time to engage in an eternal making and is his ascent qualitatively limited compared to the ascent all the way to the One? Is Plotinus seeking a mere *partial* ascent – one that will allow purified "man" to operate at the noetic level – instead of a transcendence of the two hypostases?

III.2(47).1: Here, Plotinus derives the universe directly from Intellect, positing the latter as its causative prior in two ways: first, Intellect is the archetype and model of which the universe is an image and second, it is the cause "by means of" which the universe "everlastingly" comes into existence.[34] The first implies, as Deck notes, that the universe is not unreal – but a less real image of Intellect – an imitation that is *in* true being. Moreover, as Deck notes, "the only being in the imitation is true being and only to the extent that it is there". Deck also points out that Intellect is thus both a formal and an efficient cause of the universe. It is the formal cause of the "being in the imitation" – "if there were any being in the imitation" – and the efficient cause of the "imitation as an imitation".[35] Like its "craftsmanship" without "noise and fuss" or "toil and trouble" in V.8(31).7, here too Intellect makes quietly, without restlessness – "in not making it accomplishes great works and in remaining in itself makes no small things".

III.2(47).2: Here, a disharmonious and disparate universe – a mixture of matter and form, replete with multiplicity – arises as an inferior, directly from the true and unified noetic universe – apparently without any mediation of soul, except that the World Soul "presides" over this mixture. Intellect "made all things"– again with its characteristic "unperturbed quietness" – by giving "something of itself" eternally to matter. Like the image or imprint appearing from real being in V.8(31).7, this "something" is, as Plotinus explains, the *logos* "flowing" "always" from Intellect – an eternal "always" or an "always" commensurate with the *duratio* of Intellect's presence. The result is this All – a dispersed and disharmonious image, orchestrated into a melodious whole by its overseeing *logos* – an All that participates in Intellect and *logos*.

[34] Plotinus adds that Intellect is the prior of the universe by nature and not in time.
[35] Deck, 111.

Thus in this chapter, again, Intellect makes directly – without the mediation of soul – as in the "direct action" of Intellect in V.8(31).7 and in VI.4–5 (22–23), where the intelligible world is directly present to the sensible world, which participates in it and there is nothing in between matter and the ideas.[36] Nonetheless, the World Soul remains the "starting-point" of this All, directing it with ease, without suffering harm. Its "terminal" points are matter and *logos*. The quietude or toil-free mastery, characteristic of Intellect's making, stands in stark contrast with the *polupragmatic* disquiet of the *poietic* soul in III.7(45).11; likewise, the ease of the World Soul here contrasts with its weakening self-extension in III.7(45).11.

How the Ensouled Body arises from Matter – a Sketch

Intellect bequeaths the *logoi* of the sense-world onto matter. From this non-tactual encounter between the *logoi* and matter arise the ensouled bodies of this world. The forms bring their attendant qualities, which are seen in a qualityless (*apoios*) matter (I.8(51).10, II.4(12).8). In transforming matter to body, neither soul nor *logos*, so to speak, touch matter. Soul is separate from matter for it is not in the latter as a substratum (I.8(51).14). Like Poverty begging at the feast of the gods in Plato's *Symposium* (203B4), matter begs and bothers soul and wants to come inside. Matter spreads itself under soul, receives illumination – which it darkens, by its contaminating co-mingling with this light – and weakens soul by giving it the opportunity for generation and by justifying its coming to matter (I.8(51).14). *Logos* orders, adorns and unifies matter – yet like soul it does not unite with matter.[37] Plotinus depicts the formation of body from matter in a few different ways. Four samples are as follows.

III.4(15).1: Here, indeterminate matter is generated by the "power of growth" and then – in keeping with Plotinus' usual *poietic* script, wherein a progeny returns to its progenitor to receive form – it becomes, as Carroll notes, the recipient (*hypodochên*) of its generator.[38] Yet, matter does not follow the entire script. While real beings receive form and determination when they so return, matter remains indeterminate, unformed and in darkness, for it is unable to return in contemplation to its progenitor. All it receives are qualities (which leave it unqualified), thus giving rise to ensouled bodies. Unlike its priors, which are "reared to maturity" upon receiving their forms and being shaped thereby, matter undergoes merely a *virtual* maturation with the formation of body – for it remains impassive and

[36] *Ibid*., 5.
[37] *Ibid*., 61.
[38] W.J. Carroll, "Plotinus on the Origin of Matter", in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, M.F. Wagner (ed.) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 186.

untransformed thereby. Body then is a tryst between the trace of the higher realities and impassible matter, with the form in body being the "last representative of the powers above in the last depth of the world below".

III.2(47).2: Here, the universe is formed when its *logos* flows from Intellect to matter – not as a distinct hypostasis, but as the presence of Intellect in everything subsequent. This movement of Intellect towards matter begins with its production of hypostasis soul. This text is silent on the origin of matter.[39]

V.8(31).7: Here even matter is a form – but an ultimate one.[40] Plotinus declares that "it is the last form" (*eidos ti eschaton*).[41] That matter too is a form is demonstrated also in II.3(52).17, where there is a "generative soul" in matter for the ruling principle in soul to manipulate – and matter is *living*. It is produced as a "living being" – although the "worst of living things", and one that finds its own life "disgusting". In V.8(31).7, although ontologically barren and thus below body, matter is produced before body. This universe is held fast by the *logoi* in a hierarchy of layers. The elements fire, air, water and earth are four kinds of bodies drawn from the indetermination of matter by the introduction of form. As the last form, matter is held fast by the forms of elements, upon which further and still further forms are imposed to yield the enmattered bodies of this universe. The matter of the sense-world grows buried and hidden beneath layers of forms. As Bréhier notes, the diversity and accumulation of these distinct and graded forms conceal, rather than unite with matter.[42] Intellect makes in its characteristic unperturbed way – without "toil and trouble".[43]

III.6(26)14: Here bodies comprise the images reflected in an apparently origin-less matter that acts as the repellent base. They are not formed by the production and perfection of matter through form. The matter of the sense-world is able to stall the procession from the One, for emanation is exhausted at its level. Matter "checks" the approach of the procession as a "repellent base" and "receptacle", thus serving as a *cause* of "coming into being". Here Plotinus reinforces the idea of

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[39] Carroll, 194–5.

[40] As Armstrong notes, this is the nearest Plotinus comes to a positive valuation of matter. See *Ennead V*, 259, note 2.

[41] As Carroll notes, Plotinus includes matter as "a sort of ultimate form" to show the scope of Intellect's causative power. Yet, the fact that matter is an ultimate form does not necessarily imply a causal connection with Intellect. Intellect does not cause matter to be matter. See Carroll, 191.

[42] É. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. J. Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 175.

[43] Although Plotinus describes the work of the World Soul ("good sister soul") in the same terms – as work devoid of "toil or trouble" (II.9(33).18) – the World Soul differs from Intellect, for it can weaken as it makes, as it does in III.7(45).11.

matter conceived as a mirror – for this repellent base is like polished objects that concentrate the rays of the sun on the outside. There is thus no encounter between matter and form. Body is only the image reflected in a resilient, mirror-like matter.

Conclusion

No obvious unifying *poietic* script emerges from these assorted accounts of the appearance of the world of sense. More readily available in the case of real beings, such a script eludes us here because of the titanic gulf between Intellect and the world of sense. To rescind this gulf and harmonize these myriad accounts into a coherent script calls for the keenest comprehension of the unitive and formative powers of Plotinian contemplation. Given the essential nature of this contemplation, it may be argued that there is not much difference, in the ultimate, between Intellect making the world of sense directly, or through nature, parts of soul or the World Soul. These are all engaged in a contemplation of Intellect, even as they descend to engender the sense-world. Souls do not relinquish their contemplative mooring in Intellect even when *polupragmatic*. In order to *be* at all, they must remain tethered to Intellect. Such contemplation of priors not only connects them to Intellect but renders them intellective. Contemplation flows up a ladder, as it were, from nature to the World Soul and particular souls, to soul-genus at their core and finally to Intellect. When they make the universe, they make *qua* Intellect. Depending on the strength of their contemplation, they are each, to varying degrees, dilutions of Intellect.[44] Thus dramatic accounts like III.2(47).2, where Intellect directly irradiates a *logos* that forms as its analogous image, the disharmonious world of sense, are perhaps shortcuts expressing the very essence of the *poietic* script we are seeking. The most comprehensive version of this script would call for the highest part of the entire edifice of soul – including the hypostasis soul or soul-genus, the World Soul and the individual species souls – to remain intellective, while nature, its lowest part descended to imbue matter with the *logoi* of the world of sense. Ironically, nature remains self-contained when making, while its prior, the whole edifice of soul, exteriorizes itself.

[44] Thus Deck, 69, describes nature as a "weak dilution of Nous".

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Chapter 9

Conjoint Appearance of Time and the World of Sense (III.7(45).11)

Plotinus begins his cosmology in III.7(45).11, quite fittingly, with the fore-life of time at the pre-temporal threshold of the realm of becoming. This chapter stands out in the *Enneads* as the only one with a conjoint genesis. As in Plato's *Timaeus* (38B6), here too there is a logically simultaneous genesis of time (*chronos*) and the visible cosmos (*kosmos aisthêtos*). These eternal geneses both have Intellect and soul as their common progenitors. Yet they remain disparate – for neither they, nor their respective progeny are identical. Unlike the generation of incorporeal time, that of the cosmos entails an implicit concourse with matter. Moreover – notwithstanding their simultaneous appearance – the world of sense is subordinate, or a "slave" to time by the decree of the World Soul. This means that time is ontologically prior to the cosmos even though co-generated with the latter. This also means that sensible objects exist under the common aegis of an objective time that dwells in an identical and unified form in every consubstantial soul: "It is in every soul of this kind, and in the same form in every one of them, and all are one" (III.7(45).13). Despite such differences, what binds the two concurrent geneses together is the intricate and ethereal involvement of soul and self with all stages of both geneses. In this chapter it is this psychic aspect of Plotinus' cosmology in III.7(45).11 that is explored.

Implicit in III.7(45).11 is a preamble on the *poietic* role of Intellect. Before soul can undergo its *tolmatic* restless nature, it must engage in a contemplation of Intellect, wherefrom it derives its fecundity and *poietic* powers. It must also particularize the species souls. To *be* at all, soul must be moored to Intellect by contemplating it with its primary activity. Commentators have already acknowledged this tacit, pre-cosmological contemplation of Intellect by the hypostasis soul – a contemplation threatened by its *polupragmatic* nature. Thus Strange recognizes the noetic status of soul in referring to the quietude of the "unfallen soul" as it exists in Intellect (V.3(49).6).[1] Trouillard acknowledges soul's contemplative state or "search for the necessary being it has within itself", when he notes that soul "abandons" this search before extruding itself "outwards" towards

[1] S.K. Strange, "Plotinus on the Nature of Eternity and Time", in *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*, L.P. Schrenk (ed.) (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 48, note 71.

new things and new states and giving birth to time.[2] In fact, Plotinus himself indirectly acknowledges such a noetic soul when he depicts a hypothetical withdrawal of the activity of soul in III.7(45).12. As a reversal of the procession of activity from soul, the limit this withdrawal reaches – which is the quiet noetic life of soul, as indicated by Plotinus' claim that "this part of the soul" turns back to the intelligible world and eternity – points to the origin from which the procession starts.[3] This is what soul is before undergoing its restlessly active nature, launching into discursion and making time and the world of sense. Thus the following preamble is implicit in III.7(45).11: (1) prior to the onset of its *tolmatic* restless nature, the hypostasis soul, which has already generated its species souls, is quiet, unfallen, and rapt in contemplation of Intellect; (2) Intellect is the ultimate progenitor of time and the world of sense; (3) its instruments are primarily the hypostasis soul, but also the plethora of species souls, including the World Soul.

Plotinus' concentrated words in III.7(45).11 yield many rich meditative questions. The genesis of time is not *ex nihilo*. Time appears to have an entitative fore-life related to soul. What is time during this fore-life and how is it at rest? What is the *poietic* relationship between soul and time? What is it about the hypostasis soul and the World Soul *per se* that makes time and the universe? In what manner are they discursive? To what extent does Plotinus' cosmology follow his general *poietic* script? These questions are explored in two sections: (1) Time – Fore-Life, Rest, and Genesis and (2) The Role of Soul.

Time – Fore-Life, Rest, and Genesis

The appearance of time in III.7(45).11 is unique in the order of the procession from the One, for unlike other progeny, time has a fore-life and it is drawn out from this fore-life, as an image of eternity.[4] Depicting soul's generation of time, first through what Strange describes as a "halfhearted myth, almost a parody of Platonic myths",[5] Plotinus makes the quizzical claim that a pre-temporal precursor of time

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[2] J. Trouillard, "The Logic of Attribution in Plotinus", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1961): 130–131.

[3] In III.7(45).12, Plotinus asks, if in our thought we were to stop the activity of soul and "this part of the soul turned back to the intelligible world and to eternity, and rested quietly there, what would there still be except eternity?" He answers: "If, then, when soul leaves this activity and returns to unity time is abolished, it is clear that the beginning of this movement in this direction, and this form of the life of soul, generates time".

[4] On time, see also I.5(36).7, IV.4(28).6–9, 15, VI.1(42).5, 13, 16 and VI.9(9).8.

[5] Commentators have interpreted Plotinus' sudden use of mythical language in different ways. Strange, 47, explains that these "mythical trappings" are meant to indicate that this account is not to be taken literally, for it is presented as an account of how soul first brought time into being. Yet Plotinus does not think time ever literally had a beginning. Schürmann also notes that here Plotinus departs from his otherwise strictly dialectical style and his

precedes the appearance of time (quotation 2).[6] Armstrong points to two earlier chapters in the *Enneads* (VI.7(38).1 and IV.4(28).16) which anticipate the doctrine of later Neoplatonists like Iamblichus – the doctrine that time pre-exists in the higher world.[7]

In the very opening sentences of this chapter, Plotinus situates the prelude to time in the tranquil noetic life that participates in eternity:

1. We must take ourselves back to the disposition which we said existed in eternity, to that quiet life, all a single whole, still unbounded, altogether without declination, resting in and directed towards eternity. Time did not yet exist, not at any rate for the beings of that world. (III.7(45).11)

A transition takes place from the non-existence of time cited in this quotation to its appearance.[8] We know that time does *appear*, for "one might perhaps … ask time when it has come into being to tell us how it did come into being and appear".[9]

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language suddenly becomes mythological, but explains this differently – "This is due to the impossibility to speak in a non-temporal way of what is non-temporal". As Schürmann notes, the same difficulties were encountered by Augustine in *City of God*. See R. Schürmann, "The Philosophy of Plotinus. Doctor Reiner Schürmann's Course Lectures", inventory established by Pierre Adler (New York: The New School for Social Research, Department of Philosophy, 1994, photocopied), 46. Inge suggests that Plotinus is so little troubled about the origin of time that he "half banteringly" suggests a mythological explanation (before giving his own view) – "Shall we refer to the Muses?" See W.R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, vol. I (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 172.

[6] Strictly speaking, this precursor cannot be the fore-life of the time of process, unless defined as a premature antecedent of the same entity. In III.7(45).11, Plotinus indicates quite clearly that this precursor is not "yet" time. But it is not alien to time either, insofar as Plotinus suggests, "one might perhaps … ask time when it has come into being to tell us how it did come into being and appear". Since time is being asked to describe its appearance from its own fore-life, this precursor must lie within the same continuum as time. Thus it is perhaps justifiable to apply "fore-life" to the time of the realm of process, to designate its state prior to its appearance. Insofar as time is temporally beginningless, the "fore" in this "fore-life" cannot be temporal. This precursor precedes discursive time, not temporally, but causally.

[7] See *Plotinus: VII*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 88–9, note 1.

[8] Inge, 173, suggests that we are "not meant to take literally the statement that there was a time when Time was not". In the "vulgar" sense of eternity, the beginingless and endless time series itself is eternal.

[9] This is reminiscent of the response by nature in III.8(30).4 to a different query: Why does nature make? The differences go further. Unlike this question to nature, the query to time is odd in its very formulation. In III.7(45).11 Plotinus says that one might ask time, once it has appeared, to tell us how it did come into being and appear. Time, which precedes memory insofar as it is the medium through which memory works, is expected to operate through memory – to be mnemonic and recall its own non-temporal appearance. It is no

Yet, even before it appears, time has an entitative existence as the precursor of discursive time. Time "might" say the following about its fore-life:

> 2. Before, when it had not yet, in fact, produced this "before" or felt the need of the "after", it was at rest with eternity in real being; it was not yet time, but itself, too, kept quiet in that. (III.7(45).11)

In this quotation time seems endowed with powers of *autopoiesis*, for it apparently has the capacity to "produce" its own "before" and anticipate its "after". Yet, time cannot *beget* its "before". It has no fecundity or *poietic* powers for it does not contemplate its priors. Perhaps time's *producing* its "before" means no more than its unfurling its latent discursiveness. In VI.7(38).1, Plotinus suggests as much regarding things that exist in their entirety in the intelligible world – they "existed already and existed for ever, and existed in such a way that one could say later 'this after that'". Their holism is so great that each thing also has its cause in itself. This compactness is unfurled discursively in the realm of process – "for when it is extended and in a sense unfolded it is able to display this after that". It would seem that this description of a pristine compact state, capable of being unfurled, should apply well to the fore-life and immanent manifestation of time in III.7(45).11, but with this difference – "before" and "after" replaces the "this after that", for the latter pertains only to material things (IV.4(28).16). Thus time does not have powers of *autopoiesis*. Rather, it can *unfurl* its latent discursiveness and *display* its "before" and "after".

Pieced together, the two block quotations (1 and 2) narrate the following story. Logically prior to time's unfurling itself into the discursive sequence displayed as "before" and "after", the precursor of time is at rest "with" eternity, "in" real being, coiled up, as it were, in the quietude of the noetic realm. Time exists *in* real being (singular) insofar as it is at rest in Intellect. Whether in its fore-life or after it appears, time can *never* be predicated of real beings or "beings of that world" (plural). Thus, in the sense of predication, time never can exist *for* them. In Plotinus' claim: "Time did not yet exist, not at any rate for the beings of that world", the "yet" is perplexing, if it implies that at some point time will be predicated of real beings. While in its state of noetic rest, time is not yet time – and time itself keeps quiet "in that" – its quietude indicating the relative unity attendant upon its rest in real being.

What we know so far about this pre-temporal precursor of time is not enough to identify it. We know that it has *being*, that it is not yet time, that it is in a state of

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wonder then that time's answer is only hypothetical – but not in its contents. Plotinus suggests time *might* say "something like this about itself". There is likewise a speech by the universe in III.2(47).3. Here no question is asked, but by contemplating that the whole universe in its entirety has come into being, we might "hear" the universe speak of its divine origins.

quietude and rest in real being *with* eternity, and that its presence prevents the appearance of time from being *ex nihilo*. This is not enough to identify what it is – except through negations. Clearly, it is not eternity itself – in any case, eternity is time's archetype and not its noetic form. It is indeed tempting to define eternity as time's intelligible form and to suggest that the precursor of time is eternity itself, for Plotinus himself draws an analogy between two image-paradigm relationships – that of time and eternity with that of the sensible All and the intelligible All: "Time must exist as an image of eternity (in the same relation as that in which this All stands to the Intelligible All)" (III.7(45).11). The analogy here is limited to that between the "deforming refraction"[10] of the intelligible universe by the sensible world and that of eternity by time.[11] It goes no further. It does not extend to the two archetypes *per se* except to delineate their archetypal roles. If anything, the two paradigm-image pairs in this quotation are both lesser derivatives of a prior contemplation within a primary pair. It is the contemplation of Intellect by the hypostasis soul that indirectly gives rise to these two secondary hierarchies of original verities and their corresponding images.[12] Thus there is nothing in this quotation to suggest any similitude between the two archetypes – eternity and the Intelligible All.

While eternity is intimate with intelligible nature, it is not an intelligible form. From III.7(45).4 we learn that eternity has not come to the intelligible nature from outside, or accidentally; that eternity is the intelligible nature, from it, with it; and that the nature of eternity is contemplated in the intelligible nature, "existing in it as originated from it". Moreover, III.7(45)2 indicates that eternity and the intelligible nature have a common predicate, for majesty can be predicated of both. Also, both eternity and the intelligible universe are inclusive and they include the same things. These would seem to indicate that eternity and the intelligible nature

[10] Trouillard, 127.

[11] Time too expresses eternity through a "deforming refraction", for it copies eternity analogously – through attributes that are similar yet contrasting. It is as if the same attributes are predicated of both but *analogously* – in two different media – and the contrasts seem to derive almost from the disfiguring medium in which time operates. Time appears to execute the very attributes of eternity – but in the realm of process – the alternate iconic medium in which the attributes of eternity are distended. Unlike eternity – which is a complete unbounded whole, characterized by sameness, self-identity, and unity without distance or separation – time is discursive, a mere image of unity, one in continuity, and a continuous unbounded succession (III.7(45).11). There is a blend here of imitation and difference. Thus, as Schürmann, 39, puts it, time and eternity are heteronomous – "they obey different '*nomoi*', rules". The "image-character of time and the heteronomy of time and eternity must be held together".

[12] Unlike the primary hierarchy between Intellect and soul, which remains within the compound of real beings, these latter secondary hierarchies (between the archetypal intelligible All and eternity) and their respective images (this All and time) straddle both realms – that of being *and* becoming.

are the same. Yet, eternity is distinct from Intellect and it cannot be a noetic form, because it has a greater otherness with respect to Intellect than the latter. Even though eternity has to do with intelligible nature, it must be sufficiently different from Intellect, in order for the intelligibles to participate in the eternal. In III.7(45).2 Plotinus sorts out this otherness between eternity and Intellect. That they have the common predicate of majesty does not guarantee their identity – for majesty may have come to one from the other. That they are both inclusive of the same things also does not indicate their identity, for their manner of inclusiveness is different. Eternity includes the whole all at once, such that "all things which are of such a kind as to be eternal" are so by "conforming to it" or by way of participation. Eternity compresses the otherness in the intelligible realities, thus rendering itself a seamless whole, or "partless completion" (III.7(45).2–3). By contrast, the intelligible world is inclusive only in the sense that the whole includes its parts. Thus eternity is different from Intellect in a way that the forms are not. For Plotinus, it is "incorrect" to say that intelligible forms are thoughts of Intellect, if what is meant is each particular form comes into being when Intellect thinks it – for what is thought must be prior to this thinking of a particular form (V.9(5).7). Rather, the Idea immanent within Intellect is the object of its thought, when that object is within it and is Intellect and intelligent substance Itself (V.9(5).8). Eternity cannot be the intelligible form of time – and time has none. Thus the precursor of time is not eternity. In any case, in quotation 2, this precursor of time rests – not *as* eternity – but *with* eternity, thus pointing to a subtle otherness between the latency of the image (time) and the paradigm (eternity) and ruling out any identity between the two.

Commentators have at least four positions regarding the identity of this precursor of time: (1) that it is an Idea in the intelligible world (Strange); (2) that time exists in eternity quite as much as Intellect exists in the One before it is generated (Torchia); (3) that it is the implicitness of the whole temporal order in the power of soul (Callahan); and (4) that it is the *seed* of time (Schürmann). In Strange's words, "'According to Plotinus' myth, in the beginning time did not exist, except as an Idea in the intelligible world".[13] Yet, if this precursor of time were indeed already an Idea in the intelligible world, time would stand in no need of a paradigm, thus rendering eternity redundant. What role could eternity play? Could it be the archetype for time, but not for the precursor of time? Should time then have two archetypes – eternity *and* this precursor *qua* noetic Idea? If this forerunner of time were indeed an Idea in the intelligible world, the appearance of time would amount to no more than a particularization of this Idea – a sort of incorporeal embodiment of time here in the realm of process. Yet, time may not be implicit enough during its restful fore-life to constitute a noetic Idea. Its implicitness may be weaker – reaching no further than the seminal formative principle, or seed of time, ontologically lower than eternity and the forms and a

[13] Strange, 48.

representational median between eternity and time.[14] This seed is unified only relative to the multiplicity of actual time. During its fore-life, this seed or *logos* of time should be at rest with the only archetype time has – eternity. It should also repose in the hypostasis soul, before it launches into discursion. This picture comes close to the position maintained by Torchia – that just as Intellect was depicted as "somehow" existing in the One prior to its generation, time is described as already existing in eternity.[15]

For Callahan when soul reposes in contemplation of Intellect then time also reposes – but in a state that is not yet time. By time's repose, he means the implicitness of the whole temporal order in the "power of soul". Thus time begins timelessly when soul begins to exercise this power. Although Callahan uses the metaphor of the seed, he does not refer to a seed *specific* to time. He draws an analogy between a seed at rest, containing implicitly the order of the complete plant and soul reposing in its contemplation of Intellect. Like the diffusion of the unity of the seed in the emergence of the plant with its many parts, a power of soul, discontented with reposing in Intellect, is eager to translate the unity of intelligible being into a world of multiplicity. Thus Callahan's use of the metaphor of the seed does not apply to time, but to the noetic unity of the soul at rest in Intellect.[16] Time's rest perhaps loses its significance when thus subsumed within soul's rest and the general latency this implies.

In contrast to Callahan, Schürmann defines the precursor of time as a seed *specific* to time. At first, Schürmann refers to a *polupragmatic* seed specific to soul: "There is a seed in the intellect of the world … which 'was' active in the soul still united with the Intellect, a seed which is *polypragmôn*". Later, he ascribes a contrasting, restful seed to time, thus marking out a latency germane to time: "This seed of time, when it pertains to the soul still in the Intellect, is restful; but there is a '*logos*', a principle, of restlessness in the seed: i.e. it can unfold. Then the soul breaks through the intellect's repose". Thus both references to "seed" are tied to restlessness and soul's *polupragmatic* nature is rooted in the seed of time in soul. For Schürmann, the metaphor of the seed describes the process of "exteriorization" – it suggests a "unity that bears in it possible multiplicity". Applied to time, this means its rest and unity are destroyed once it is "exteriorized" from its "seed" into the time of the visible world. As Schürmann points out, Plotinus takes this dialectic of implicit versus real multiplicity from the Stoic *logos spermatikos*, but with this

[14] This leads to a moot question – if time has no noetic form, can it have a seed or *logos* of time – that is, can a *logos* exist in the absence of a form?

[15] N.J. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Being* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 73.

[16] J.F. Callahan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1948), 129–30.

difference – he thinks of the *logos* as immaterial.[17] As Armstrong notes, the analogy of the seed is a favorite with Plotinus, in whose way of thinking, the seed is superior in its "concentrated unity" to the full-grown plant.[18]

In this work, following Schürmann, the precursor of time is taken to be the *logos* or seminal formative principle of time, represented by the metaphor of the seed. This seed state from which time emerges cannot be the *cause* of time for the formative principles through which Intellect generates, include powers that precede the seminal principles which are less potent – "What comes to be in the All, then, does not come to be according to seminal formative principles but according to formative principles which include powers which are prior to the principles in the seeds" (IV.4(28).39).

In III.7(45).11 Plotinus tells us that time in its fore-life is at *rest* with eternity in real being. In III.7(45).2 Plotinus tries to sort out the relationship between eternity and intelligible rest (*stasis*). Using rest and motion, the Platonic categories of the intelligible world, Plotinus asks if eternity corresponds to "rest there" as "people say" time does to motion. Rest is predicated of eternity and eternity participates in the genus rest, but it is not absolute rest. In its fore-life, time is restful perhaps indirectly – through eternity's participation in rest, for the *logos* or seed of time is at rest *with* eternity. This conclusion can be inferred from commentators' definitions of the precursor of time. As an "Idea in the intelligible world" (Strange) this precursor participates in the genus rest, like all other Ideas. As the whole temporal order implicit in the power of soul (Callahan), it is at rest because it is implicit and because it shares in soul's repose as it contemplates Intellect, thus participating in the genus rest.[19] As a "seed" (Schürmann) this precursor of time is in a state of restful self-concentration for at least three related reasons.[20] First, insofar as it is the *logos* or seed of time, it represents the intellectuality that participates in the genus rest. Second, the latency of this seed implies rest, for it has not yet garnered the multiplicity incarnate in actual time. For Schürmann, time, in its fore-life, lay "self-concentrated" and at rest. This is consistent with Plotinus' point in VI.7(38).1 that things exist with a compact holism in the higher world before they unfurl here in the realm of process. Its self-concentration implies that the precursor of time has more unity than actual time – it has the compactness of a seed. This is why it is restful. As a relative unity, this seed is at rest, for it reins in the further multiplicity of unfurled time. Since soul has not yet launched into discursive activity, this seed has not "yet" produced its "before", or needed its "after". Thus this seed cannot help but be in a state of rest

[17] Schürmann, 48–9. As Schürmann, 49, notes, Plotinus uses "seed" also in III.2(47).2, IV.8(6).6, IV.9(8). 3, 5, and V.9(5).6.

[18] *Plotinus Ennead III*, 48, note 1.

[19] Callahan, 129.

[20] Schürmann's restful self-concentration of time should correspond to Callahan's restful implicitness of the temporal order in noetic soul.

relative to the unrest of succession and priority in discursive time. Thus, as Torchia notes, before time exists, it enjoys a "stable" condition, comparable with the serenity of eternity, knowing neither priority nor succession.[21] Third, the principle of *tolmatic* restlessness, latent in soul, which contrasts with this prior stability, has not yet been actualized. Hence, time's rest "during" this fore-life is also a rest from *tolma*.

Exactly what does Plotinus mean by the *appearance* of time? How should it be characterized? Is there an actual appearance – does something new indeed emerge? Or is time merely *manifested* from its covert noetic fore-life to its overt discursive flow? Clearly time has an appearance – but one that is not *ex nihilo*. This means that there is a *genesis* of time – and it could be described in at least four related ways. First, the appearance of time is the discursive unfurling of the implicit temporal sequence coiled up in the seed or *logos* of time. Here genesis means the transmission of the *logos* of time – as an image of eternity – to its incorporeal actualization in the mimetic realm of process. It is also means a *descent* in the degree of reality and an insubstantial shift – from the noetic seed to the less real discursive flow of time. Second, the genesis of time also indicates a shift within soul. It is the result of the onset of soul's *polupragmatic* nature, upon which, soul "breaks through the intellect's repose" – to use Schürmann's words. Third, the conjoint genesis of time and the world of sense is also a "transfer" entailing a transmutation, for soul's unquiet power seeks to transfer its noetic vision to the realm of process, preferring to fragment its objects of knowledge to discursive images of the intelligible objects it already knows (III.7(45).11). There is nothing inherently generative about a "transfer". In fact, this term is somewhat misleading, for it implies that the same entity is relocated, rather than recreated. But here the transfer entails relocation as well as transmutation. What soul's unquiet power sees in the noetic realm, it seeks to transfer or relocate to the realm of process ("something else") and in so doing, it seeks to mutate soul's vision of eternity and the forms to time and the universe, their distended images. The conversion of soul's vision to the copies in the visible world is perhaps the work of the *logoi*. Before this conversion takes place, the hypostasis soul already knows this "whole" or true being. Now it converts this whole to a discursive flow of its images, so that it can think each, part by part. Finally, the genesis of time is also a change from one way of life to another – or, as Schürmann puts it, time's origin is the "mutation of life, from intellectual to animated".[22]

Commentators differ in their definitions of the appearance of time. For Smith, "the procession of time from the transcendence of Intellect is expounded within the familiar framework of procession of Hypostases",[23] although time is by no means a

[21] Torchia, 73.

[22] Schürmann, 50.

[23] A. Smith, "Eternity and time", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 209.

separate hypostasis. As the "procession" proceeds time should uncoil into fuller actualizations – an uncoiling that starts, not from time itself, but from the *spermatic logos* of time – a *logos* that is yet to unfold and lose its unity. Schürmann describes this genesis as the "exitus of time", or the "deduction" or "egressus" of time from eternity – this last being somewhat misleading for the uncoiling of time is hardly a direct switch from eternity to time. He also maintains that this genesis should be depicted as an "exteriorization" rather than "fall" of time from eternity, for the former remains more within the vocabulary of procession and allows us to keep at bay questions as to whether this process is one of freedom or necessity – that is, whether it is the origin of all evil, as in the Gnostics, a "guiltful errancy", or a necessary procession of beings.[24] Trouillard traces the genesis of time to an act of soul and suggests that the act from which time arises is very much "an *ecstasy* in the etymological sense of the word", insofar as soul projects itself outwards towards new things and states, by the same act by which it gives "birth" to time.[25] Trouillard's use of "ecstasy", maintains the logic in Schürmann's "exitus", "egressus", and the "exteriorization of time from eternity" – all four point to the downward extrusion of soul attendant upon the generation of time. Likewise, Torchia too focuses on the descent of soul, depicting the "initiation of time" as "an act whereby an aspect or principle of soul becomes temporalized, thereby subjecting itself to the demands of change and process".[26]

Finally, in what sense are the simultaneous appearance of time and the world of sense eternal? While the fore-life of time itself is eternal, so is the appearance of the discursive flow of time. Although the genesis of time includes the inception of discursive time, time does not span the length of this genesis, for this precedes time logically. Is this appearance of time itself an active noetic actuality, always already existent, of which eternal existence is predicated? That there is no temporal advent of time is agreed upon by all commentators. Strange notes that Plotinus does not think time ever literally had a beginning. The relationship between soul and time is causal: "Soul, as the cause of the being of time, is ontologically prior to it".[27] Smith also observes that the generation of time is to be conceived in terms of "causal rather than temporal sequence".[28] Likewise, Schürmann denies a temporal advent for Plotinian time: "The process, or exitus of time, is not in time" – and draws a contrast between Plato and Plotinus – "'Generation' of time is not meant here in the Platonic sense, where time has a real beginning." Time begins only "metaphorically" because its beginning is contemporaneous with soul. The process of "temporalization" of soul is itself a "timeless event".[29] Finally, Callahan also

[24] Schürmann, 46, 49–50.
[25] Trouillard, 130–131.
[26] Torchia, 71.
[27] Strange, 47–8.
[28] Smith, 209.
[29] Schürmann, 47, 50.

notes that the advent of time is timeless. The "descent" of time "did not have a first moment, but is something that is ever taking place". Time comes "later", but without "a first moment of its existence". It is later only insofar as it belongs to a grade of existence inferior to and dependent on intelligible being.[30]

The Role of Soul

Plotinus uses two definitions of time: (1) time as the life of soul, a definition he contributes to the western tradition of the philosophy of time; and (2) time as the moving image of eternity, a definition he inherits from Plato's *Timaeus* (38B6–C2, 37D4–C7). Both are relevant to the role of soul in the appearance of time. It is this life of soul or "real time", as Smith puts it – to be contrasted with "manifested time" or the time of the physical world, which manifests "real time" – that appears in a discursive format, once soul launches into discursion. The world of sense appears simultaneously with this "real time", which Smith describes as something interfaced between eternity and the "manifested time" of the physical world and between the intelligible world and the physical cosmos.[31] In III.7(45).11 Plotinus contributes his own definition of time through a rhetorical query: "So would it be sense to say that time is the life of soul in a movement of passage from one way of life to another?" The first way of life is eternity – the compact life at rest, "unchanging and identical and already unbounded". The second way is time, the distended life that copies eternity through contrasts. Insofar as it is the genus of all life (VI.2(43).7), movement is predicated of all life. In the narrower framework of the world of soul, this predication takes a special psychic form – the motion of soul from one way of life to another is predicated of the life of soul *qua* time. That time is the life of soul signifies its intimacy with the latter. Time's otherness with respect to soul is minimal, for it is not outside soul. Neither an "accompaniment" of soul, nor posterior to it, time is seen "along with" soul, existing "in it and with it" just as eternity does "There" with real being (III.7(45).11). This intimate relationship becomes all the clearer when we consider Plotinus' identification of time with the activity of soul (Chapter 12), in keeping with his usual *poietic* script wherein the irradiating and iconic second activity from the progenitor is identified with the progeny itself. If the relationship between eternity and Intellect is transposed onto time and soul, then, just as eternity is intelligible through

[30] Callahan, 118.

[31] For the distinction between "real" time and "manifested" time see A. Smith, "Soul and Time in Plotinus", in *Psukhe – Seele – Anima*, J. Holzhausen (ed.) (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1998), 335. For a critique of the distinction between life of soul and movements measured according to this life represented as a distinction between "psychical" and "physical" time, see L.P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London: Routledge, 1994), 122.

participation in Intellect,[32] so should time be psychic through participation in soul. Unlike other progeny in the procession from the One, time is not inchoate when it appears. It is already formed according to a "pattern of eternity" as its "moving image" – the classic Platonic characterization of time (Chapter 13). In its fore-life, time is at rest *with* eternity, compressing the usual otherness inherent between image and archetype. Once generated by soul, time is an analogous copy in the realm of becoming, with the otherness between archetype and image now revealed in the analogy.

Although unique in the *Enneads* for its involvement of the *polupragmatic* soul, the unstated implicit features of III.7(45).11 render it more or less a cameo of the broad *poietic* script of Plotinian emanation, especially at its moribund stage – namely, the script that might emerge from Plotinus' myriad depictions of the genesis of the world of sense. Such features include the implicit contemplation of Intellect by the hypostasis soul, prior to its generation of time and the world of sense, the movement and direction of soul's activities and *logoi*, and the involvement of the entire genus-species structure of soul in this conjoint genesis, including its implicit concourse with the matter of the sense-world. Implicit in III.7(45).11 is the flow of soul's activities incurred in its generation of time and the world of sense. Notwithstanding soul's *polupragmatic* nature, the upward flow of its primary activity keeps it moored to Intellect, while the down-flow of its iconic second activity conveys the *logoi* and constructs time and the universe. Thus in III.7(45).13, soul "generates its own individual activities".

Given the genus-species structure of soul, we know that all three levels of soul are implicated in the conjoint genesis of time and the cosmos – the hypostasis soul, the World Soul, and "we". Yet, in III.7(45).11–13, Plotinus does not clearly discern between the roles of the hypostasis soul and the World Soul. In order to read between the lines and identify the level of soul involved, it is important that we read each relevant passage in the context of this entire text. The following sample of passages instantiate the *poietic* roles of these three levels of soul, with the hypostasis soul and the World Soul discerned as follows:

3. *Making by the hypostasis soul*:

3.1 This moved, and time moved with it. (III.7(45).11)

3.2 It is the activity of an always existing soul, whose activity is not directed to itself or in itself, but lies in making and production. (III.7(45).12)

3.3 This is why it is said that time came into existence simultaneously with this universe, because soul generated it along with this universe. (III.7(45).12)

[32] Against the Pythagoreans, Plotinus takes eternity to participate in the intelligible. See D. Nikulin, "Plotinus on Eternity", *Le Timée de Platon*, A. Neschke-Hentschke (ed.) (Paris: Éditions Peeters Louvain, 2000), 38.

3.4 This movement of soul was the first to enter time, and generated time, and possesses it along with its own activity. (III.7(45). 13)

4. *Making by the World Soul*:

> As from a quiet seed the formative principle, unfolding itself, advances, as it thinks, to largeness, but does away with the largeness by division and, instead of keeping its unity in itself, squanders it outside itself and so goes forward to a weaker extension; in the same way Soul, making the world of sense in imitation of that other world, moving with a motion which is not that which exists There, but like it, and intending to be an image of it, first of all put itself into time, which it made instead of eternity, and then handed over that which came into being as a slave to time, by making the whole of it exist in time and encompassing all its ways with time. (III.7(45).11)

5. *Making by the "We"*:

> And so, always moving on to the "next" and the "after", and what is not the same, but one thing after another, we made a long stretch of our journey and constructed time as an image of eternity. (III.7(45).11)

In III.7(45).11–13, it is not as if the three levels of soul divide the tasks of making amongst themselves. There isn't the usual division of labor among higher and lower souls – with the higher soul contemplating Intellect while lower souls descend to engage in making. Moreover, here the hypostasis soul's generative activity is spurred by its *polupragmatic* nature. Instead of beginning its *poietic* activity with fecundity drawn from an unbroken contemplation of Intellect, it begins with a *polupragmatic* dearth that threatens its repository of fecundity and existing contemplation. Perhaps these are two key ways in which III.7(45).11–13 differ from passages elsewhere in the *Enneads*. Thus in III.9(13).3, the higher "universal soul" (*pasa psuchê*) abides "always above" with Intellect "where it is natural for it to be", while a "partial soul" "meets reality" when it rises towards its prior, but declines towards "non-existence" when it veers towards its posterior. Again in IV.7(2).13, a higher, intellective soul remains eternally engaged in intellectual life and unaffected, while what descends is something lower, contiguously below Intellect and burdened by the desire to impart "order and beauty" to matter in accordance with the noetic pattern it "sees" in Intellect. By contrast, in III.7(45).11, the hypostasis soul – like any of its mundane species souls – descends to make, carrying in its train the motion caused by its *polupragmatic* nature, which dislodges time from its *logoic* fore-life. Yet, insofar as the hypostasis soul is indeed the prime generator of time and the cosmos and the direct seat of *polupragmatic* dearth – there remains here a trace of a division of labor. The World Soul and the "we" *qua* species souls are subsidiary, for they merely imitate

intelligible motion and the archetypal sempiternal discursion of the hypostasis soul.

All the motion Plotinus refers to in quotations 3–5 – whether of the hypostasis soul, the World Soul, the "we", or time – is discursive. The details of the discursive nature of the hypostasis soul, which is the subject of motion in 3.1, are expressed more fully in III.7(45).12–13. In III.7(45).12, Plotinus depicts the "uniform" laps of a "quiet", linear, "progressing", "never-ending" discursive life emanating from the hypostasis soul:

6. We must understand, too, from this that this nature is time, the extent of life of this kind which goes forward in even and uniform changes progressing quietly, and which possesses continuity of activity. (III.7(45).12)

In III.7(45).13, the discursive movement of the hypostasis soul is divided into "equal intervals": "… and this to the movement of the soul, which is divided into equal intervals". It is in imitation of this proportionate, rhythmic division of the motion of the hypostasis soul, that the "soulless" movement in this world first came into existence: "… he would be granting that soulless movement has 'before' and 'after' and time accompanying it, but denying this to the movement in imitation of which this [soulless] movement has come into existence". In fact, soul is the architect of its own activities, their discursive mode and thus also its own "before" and "after": "… as it generates its own individual activities, so it generates their succession, and, along with their generation, the transition from one of them to another".

In III.7(45).11 (quotation 4), when like the quiet seed, the World Soul unfolds into a weaker extension and moves with a motion, which is "not that which exists There, but like it, and intending to be an image of it", it reveals its implicit discursiveness. Although iconic, psychic motion differs from intelligible motion. It is similar to the extent that it "intends" to be an image of the latter, but not identical – it is not intelligible motion *per se*. What distinguishes the psychic motion of the World Soul from the intelligible motion it seeks to copy, is precisely, its discursiveness, which drives a wedge of otherness between archetype and image. That the motion of the World Soul is intended to be an "image" of the intelligible motion "There", points to homonymy in the archetype-image relationship. Both are movements, but only in name. The discursiveness of the World Soul is a distended analogue of intelligible motion. This distention, revealed in the ordered succession inherent in the discursion of the World Soul, is expressed more clearly later in the same chapter:

7. For as Soul presents one activity after another, and then again another in ordered succession, it produces the succession along with activity, and goes on with another thought coming after that which it had before, to that which did not previously exist

> because discursive thought was not in action, and Soul's present life is not like that which came before it. (III.7(45).11)

In this quotation the World Soul copies the discursive format of the hypostasis soul. Like its genus, in III.7(45).13, the World Soul is also the architect of its activities and the discursive layout implicit in their "succession". Likewise, the "we" too moves discursively in III.7(45).11 (quotation 5) – as evinced by its "moving on to the 'next' and the 'after'" – in imitation of the hypostasis soul and the World Soul in III.7(45).11–13. Not only are these motions of the different levels of soul – starting from the genus down to the "we" – all discursive, but they are so in a *specific* rhythmic manner. It is clear that the discursion is "uniform" (Chapter 12) or "ordered" (Chapter 11), "divided into equal intervals" (Chapter 13), and advancing "quietly" in a linear "progression" (Chapter 12). The discursiveness of soul devolves upon its mode of thinking. The hypostasis soul no longer apprehends true being simultaneously, for it has fallen from the intelligible realm. In III.7(45).11, its unquiet power prefers to think images of real being in a discursive sequence. That the life of soul progresses "quietly" (Chapter 12), notwithstanding the disquiet of its power in III.7(45).11, proves that its level of discursion remains high. Pertaining to what in III.7(45).12 is an "always existing" soul, the discursion of the hypostasis soul in III.7(45).13 is post-eternal, yet pre-cosmic, pre-temporal, causal and "everlasting", or sempiternal:

8. Why, then, do we trace back the origin of this movement of the All to that which encompasses it, and say that it is in time, but do not say that the movement of soul, which goes on in it in everlasting progression, is in time? It is because what is before the movement of soul is eternity, which does not run along with it or stretch out with it. This movement of soul was the first to enter time, and generated time, and possesses it along with its own activity. (III.7(45).13)

This is the highest timeless discursion of soul described in Chapter 4 of this book as a logical discursion, below Intellect. In IV.4(28).16, this highest discursion is evident in the priority in higher soul, which derives from an "arranging principle" *qua* form and power that gives orders, without uttering them. This level of soul is unified enough that there is identity between "arranging principle" and primary arrangement. Soul's priority derives – not from an "arranging principle" that utters orders, which indicates, as Smith notes, a disjunction of orderer from order – but from the "primary arrangement" itself, identified with its orderer, which gives orders without articulating them and simply makes "this after that" in material things. Although, as Smith notes, this does not clarify how there can be a kind of sequence in soul and what exactly this might be, the priority in soul is perhaps the priority encoded in the arrangement with which the silent orderer is unified – a priority distinct from that in Intellect. As Smith concludes, III.7(45) and IV.4(28)

are not inconsistent in that both accept "before" and "after", but of a "special kind" – one operating at the level of "real time".[33]

Is there anything inherently *poietic* about movement itself? In the procession from the One, the *modus operandi* of Plotinian *poiesis* certainly entails motion. Movement is incurred by the flow of activity that bequeaths the *logoi* and enforms the progeny. Even so, it is not motion as such that makes, but the fecundity incarnated in the *logoi*. Movement is merely the conduit through which the *logoi* reach their destination. The progenitor's fecundity is represented in the *logoi* it transmits. In III.7(45).11–13, Plotinus speaks in two ways. On the one hand it is as if soul's motion as such – or its discursive format – is *poietic* with respect to time and the universe. Thus in Chapter 13, Plotinus claims that it is the movement of the hypostasis soul that generates directly – "This movement of soul was the first to enter time, and generated time." On the other hand, soul's motion seems to do no more than accompany its *poietic* activity. In Chapter 11, quotation 3.1, the hypostasis soul moves and time moves "with" it. Insofar as the World Soul copies this in quotation 4, perhaps its motion too merely accompanies its *poietic* activity.[34] In what sense then is soul the *cause* of time?

For Strange, Plotinus' saying that soul existed "before" time (III.7(45).11) is a "clear if metaphorical way" of suggesting that "soul, as the cause of the being of time, is ontologically prior to it". To sum up the link between the discursion of soul and the construction of time Strange claims: "The stages of the soul's life are constantly different and successive … and this defines and *generates* temporal succession as a construction out of the process of discursive mental activity". Thus "the dated linear succession of events derives from the psychological succession of thoughts: the 'now' of time is the present moment of consciousness". Strange notes further that psychic motion is more real than physical motion. Moreover, its succession is metaphysically the cause of succession both in time and physical motion. Citing III.7(45).12, Strange notes that insofar as the cessation of soul's discursive activity would abolish time, it must be this that generates time.[35] This causative precedence of psychic movement is something that Plotinus illustrates by

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[33] Smith, "Soul and Time", 339. Blumenthal detects an inconsistency between IV.4(28).15 and the clear attachment of time to soul in III.7(45). H.J. Blumenthal, "*Nous* and Soul in Plotinus: Some Problems of Demarcation", in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 211. Strange points to a different inconsistency – that between IV.4(28).17 and III.7(45).11. In the former, Plotinus explains discursion and temporal succession in terms of the "practical need" for "incarnate soul" to focus on different "intentional objects". This seems inconsistent with the latter because it presupposes the existence of the physical universe. Strange, 49, note 76.

[34] The World Soul moves with a motion that imitates noetic motion and seeks to be its image. Although aspiratory, this is unlikely to render its mere motion generative, for the World Soul is copying a motion of descent – it is copying Intellect's unrolling away from the One in III.8(30).8.

[35] Strange, 47–50, 52. The italics are mine.

his example of the moving man in Chapter 13. He demonstrates the anterior status of psychic motion, with respect to temporal and physical motion by tracing the physical motion of a moving man to the movement of a certain extent or *duratio* (which he posits as the *cause*) and its time and further back, to the corresponding movement of soul.

While the anterior presence of a *duratio* can, in some structural sense be the cause of motions posterior to it, such a cause can never be progenitive. Wherefrom can mere logical precedence derive the wherewithal with which to *beget* posterior motions? Exactly how does the succession of psychic life generate or beget the temporal succession?[36] Despite sentences in Chapters 11–13 that sound as if soul's motion or its discursive format *per se* begets time and the universe, what ultimately makes is the activity flowing from the different echelons of soul. This activity is the life of soul. Yet, when Plotinus claims in III.7(45).12, that "this form of the life of soul, generates time", the onus for begetting returns to the "form" or discursive format, rather than the fecundity of the *logoi* borne by the life of soul.[37]

The generation of time by soul, its immediate progenitor, should follow Plotinus' usual *poietic* script, wherein, the progeny *is* the secondary activity flowing down from the progenitor. As the life of soul, time should be identified with the activity of soul. Thus in III.7(45).12 the life of soul "possesses continuity of activity" and is "never-ending" because it is the activity of an "always existing soul". And later in the same chapter, time *is* this activity – "For it is in activity of this kind that this universe has come into being; and the activity is time and the universe is in time." In III.7(45).13 time and the universe are made by this life or flow of discursive activity – "… one life produces heaven and time" – just as every progeny in Plotinian emanation is made by the down-flowing activity of the progenitor, but also identified with this activity.

In Plotinus' arrangement of III.7(45).11, time and the universe are generated in a logical sequence of five related stages or moments, beginning with the *polupragmatic* disarray of the hypostasis soul. The first two and the fourth are captured in the following quotation:

> 9. But since there was a restlessly active nature which wanted to control itself and be on its own, and chose to seek for more than its present state, this moved, and time moved with it …. For because soul had an unquiet power, which wanted to keep on transferring what it saw there to something else, it did not want the whole to be present to it all together.[38] (III.7(45).11)

[36] In Chapter 10 of this book, these questions are addressed again in reference to the "we".

[37] Although it is not its discursion *per se* that begets time and the universe, the discursion of soul remains significant insofar as it serves as the archetype for the discursive formats of the flow of becoming and time.

[38] Schürmann, 48, takes the subject of the *polupragmatic* nature here to be the World Soul and not the hypostasis soul. Likewise, Armstrong too uses the World Soul when he maintains that it is a "power" or "part" of "cosmic soul" that has this "fussy independent

First, soul's "restlessly active nature" expresses its apostate desire for autonomy with respect to the noetic world. The subject in question is the hypostasis soul.[39] As a result, soul "falls" from the intelligible realm. It is fallen compared to the quiet, unfallen state of soul in Intellect in V.3(49).6.[40]

Second – as a direct result of its "restlessly active nature", and anticipating Plotinus' warning later in III.2(47).1, about the violent self-extrusion inevitable when there is restless activity – the hypostasis soul stirs in an extrusive, but indirectly *poietic* motion, accompanied by the birth of time. Just as in V.2(11).1, where soul "does not abide unchanged when it produces", here too soul "does not abide unchanged". It stirs, as it were, out of itself. There are thus two motions of soul – its first motion of restlessness giving rise to its second extrusive motion of descent. This latter movement is marked by ontological loss insofar as it manifests soul's *polupragmatic* nature and the birth of discursive thought. However, it is also positive insofar as it spurs time out of a *logoic* fore-life such that time moves *with* it. This nascent first flutter of time occurs, not at the level of the precursor, at rest with eternity in real being, but at the level of Smith's "real time", which stirs *from* its noetic fore-life. Insofar as the ultimate source of these motions of soul and time lie in soul's restless nature, Schürmann is somewhat right in pointing out that "… time is of irrational origin".[41] The birth of discursive thought here is coeval with the birth of time and soul's apostate fall away from Intellect. As Trouillard notes, the same act of soul that gives birth to time is also the act by which soul is extrusive and projects itself "outwards" towards new states and new things. Thus, "the genesis of time implies the origin of discursive thought".[42]

In a third logically distinct, but simultaneous moment, the subject of genesis changes from the hypostasis soul to the self *qua* "we" (quotation 5). "We" now launch into discursion, in imitation of the hypostasis soul and the World Soul and construct time as the image of eternity. Implicit here is also the generation of the world of sense by the "we".

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nature". See A.H. Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", in *Gnosis, Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978), 120.

[39] The ramifications of this *tolmatic* phase are discussed in detail in Chapter 12 of this book.

[40] Even though, as Trouillard, 131, notes, discursive thought is the "fragmented word of contemplation" in a soul "tending toward the intelligible by which it has been fecundated", here soul can no longer be turning altogether towards Intellect, for through its restless nature, it has chosen autonomy from Intellect. Yet in order to still *be* soul, it must remain moored to Intellect. Trouillard also notes that Plotinus does not identify discursive thought and time with the fallen state. Thus any "fall" of soul here can be only relative. Strange, 48, makes it clear that soul has fallen from the intelligible realm – one sign is that it can no longer think its thoughts with the simultaneity characteristic of Intellect.

[41] Schürmann, 49. For a more nuanced view see Chapter 12.

[42] Trouillard, 130–131.

In the fourth logical moment (quotation 9) the subject reverts from the "we" back to the hypostasis soul – or rather, its unquiet power[43] – which prefers a discursive flow of images of the noetic "whole" it already knows, to seeing the latter all at once. This is to accommodate its fallen state. Thus it is a combination of two factors – the hypostasis soul's *polupragmatic* nature and the expedient desire of its unquiet power to "keep on transferring" (and thus refracting) the intact noetic objects of vision to the distending medium of the realm of becoming – that spur the appearance of time and the world of sense. Through its desire, the unquiet power of the hypostasis soul straddles not only the realm of real being but also that of becoming. Unlike IV.7(2).13, where a descended soul is "eager to make", here, it isn't as if soul's primary urge is the direct desire to *make*. In III.7(45).11 soul's principle desires are twofold – to seek autonomy from Intellect and to seek, through its unquiet power, to transfer its noetic vision to the realm of process. As a result, it makes the world of images because this is expedient – this is all it can grasp any more. As Strange notes, it is impossible that the fallen soul can "come to possess anything of its own outside the intelligible world since that world already contains the totality of being". To satisfy its desire, soul is "forced" to make for itself a world of appearance, "in the only way it can" – in the image of the world of Ideas it already knows.[44] Copying the embryonic Intellect in VI.7(38).15, which breaks up the power it receives from the One, or makes this one power many, so that it might "bear it part by part", soul carves out, through this very mimesis, its seminal difference with respect to Intellect – while Intellect can think all its thoughts at once, soul can think only discursively, one thought at a time. We know that this "transfer" is successful, for the world of sense does *appear*. Within the purview of the hypostasis soul, there is thus an implicit interval between the appearance of time and that of the world of sense, notwithstanding their logical simultaneity. Two distinct motions bring about the two appearances. The appearance of time accompanies the motion of soul caused by its *polupragmatic* nature – soul moves and time moves with it. But the possibility of the discursive appearance of the world of sense is brought about by the expedient desire of its unquiet power to transmute its vision of noetic objects to their discursive images. The first motion is *tolmatic*, while the second is not.[45]

Finally, in a fifth logical moment, the *poietic* subject changes once more – this time to the World Soul (quotation 4), which moves forward to a weaker extension, copying on the one hand the recalcitrant motion of the hypostasis soul, and on the other, intending to copy intelligible motion, as it goes on making time and the universe eternally. Even though quotation 4 is subsequent to 5 in Plotinus' arrangement in III.7(45).11, making by the World Soul (quotation 4) should

[43] Based on a comparison of III.7(45).11 with IV.7(2).13 (beginning), IV.3(27).7, and VI.8(39).2, Strange, 48, takes this "unquiet power" to be desire.

[44] Strange, 48.

[45] See Chapter 12 of this book.

precede that by the "we" (quotation 5), for the World Soul is "senior" to the "we", and the "we" should be copying its seniors. The incipient desire of the unquiet power of the hypostasis soul to "keep on transferring" what it sees in the noetic sphere now bears fruit. Like the *logos* from the "quiet" seed, which manifests the latent multiplicity of this seed by "squandering" its unity and going forth to a "weaker" extension, the World Soul is *logoic* in its self-extension – an extension that is thinning or insubstantially self-diluting.[46] *Prima facie*, this seems paradoxical – the World Soul is *polupragmatic* in its imitation of the hypostasis soul, even as it is aspiratory in its intention to imitate intelligible motion. This is no paradox however, for although aspiratory, what the World Soul intends to copy is Intellect's unrolling away from the One in III.8(30).8 – a motion of voluntary separation. Perhaps what ultimately copies this archetypal noetic motion is the soul-genus at the core of the World Soul.

While its motion in quotation 4 is clearly discursive, what level of discursion does the World Soul undergo? It cannot be discursive at the level of human reasoning. Soul's reasoning or planning (*dianoia* or *logismos*), while analogous and homonymous with discursive reasoning at the human level, is clearly distinct from the latter.[47] In III.2(47).2, Plotinus denies altogether that the World Soul uses *logismos*. This universe has come into existence, not as a result of "a process of reasoning that it ought to exist but because it was necessary that there should be a second nature". In II.3(52).17 it is not "reasoning" that "manipulates" the generative soul in matter, but the part of the World Soul, which possesses the *logoi*. This is according to the forms. In IV.8(6).7–8 the World Soul abides attached to prior realities and maintains the beauty and order of the whole in "effortless transcendence", without "calculating and considering, as we do, but by Intellect". In IV.8(6).7 the World Soul "considers what lies below it contemplatively". As Deck points out, its "consideration" is neither sensation nor discursive reasoning, which is based on sensation. Rather, this "consideration" is the World Soul's eternal wisdom. In II.9(33).2 the World Soul manages body not "as a result of discursive thinking". Thus Deck confirms, citing IV.4(28).10 that like Intellect, the World Soul produces without *logismos* and concludes that while the knowing and contemplating activities of the World Soul are not reasoning, yet, insofar as they "form a link between the intelligible and the sensible", they are like reasoning. Its wisdom is above discursive reasoning, but its contemplating falls short of the wisdom of Intellect. Likewise, citing IV.8(6).8, Rist points out that the World Soul has no power of discursive reason (*logismos*) as we have, but acts by "purely intellective means" in its administration of the cosmos. Although in

[46] See Chapter 12 of this book for an analysis of this weakening self-extension of the World Soul and a comparison with III.2(47).2.

[47] G.M. Gurtler, "Providence: The Platonic Demiurge and Hellenistic Causality", in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, M.F. Wagner (ed.) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 100.

V.1(10).3 soul has discursive intellection, Rist concludes, like Deck, that the "higher soul" is intermediate between discursive reasoning and Intellect. Citing II.9(33).2, Blumenthal also notes that the World Soul does not employ discursive reason (*dianoia*).[48] Regarding III.7(45).11, Armstrong points out that the World Soul *per se* does not "fall" – rather, it lets a "dianoetic power" or *logos* of itself descend to the discursive level.[49] Citing IV.4(28).17, Smith notes that the "Soul-life" of time, described in IV.4(28).16 is quite distinct from the "entimed life" of the embodied soul.[50] Smith notes further that the reasoning used by the World Soul – different from that used by embodied humans – is in harmony with the requirements of a cognitive activity which is not "in time", but intimately related to "real time". As Smith points out, while Plotinus may not have discerned two separate faculties of reasoning power, he does refer to different modes of reasoning in both Soul and the individual soul. Citing I.3(20).4, Smith suggests further that at least part of the dialectic that Plotinus depicts in this chapter may be assigned to reasoning at the level of "real time". This is the stage that transcends the use of "logical activity" (*logikê pragmateia*) – a thinking that transcends its expression in logically expressed uttered form but has not attained the stability of Intellect. There is thus a higher reasoning power – in between embodied reasoning and the eternity of Intellect – that exists in both the World Soul and the individual soul and it is characterized by a kind of "transcendent sequence not incompatible with the exuberant time-life of soul" in III.7(45). This is perhaps the discursive thought (IV.3(27).18) and motion (IV.4(28).6–9) that Trouillard describes as "absolutely pure", insofar as they are the "pure flow of the mind and remain within it".[51]

Thus it is clear that the World Soul, if discursive, is so in a way that far transcends discursive reasoning. As Deck notes, the knowledge by which the World Soul produces is neither *logismos* nor *dianoia*. Yet in III.7(45).11 it is patently clear that the World Soul moves discursively as it produces time and the cosmos. As a result, it cannot retain the immunity it would have derived from an unperturbed contemplative vision of Intellect – a vision, which Deck tells us is "not an affair of discursive reason".[52] Although moored to Intellect, it declines instead into a weakening self-extension, trying to imitate noetic motion (quotation 4). This motion of the World Soul, although discursive and insubstantially diluting, must transcend discursive reasoning. It must be that "higher reasoning power", or

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[48] J.M. Rist, *Plotinus. The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 89; Blumenthal, 218.

[49] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 120.

[50] Yet, reasoning at a level beyond "manifested time" is not "irrelevant" to the individual soul. This level of reasoning is one which the individual soul should aim at and even surpass. Smith, "Soul and Time", 342–3.

[51] Trouillard, 131.

[52] J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 45–9.

"transcendent sequence" above articulation, but below Intellect that Smith identifies[53] – an echo of the post-eternal, pre-cosmic, higher sempiternal discursion of the hypostasis soul, situated in between Intellect and discursive reason (III.7(45).13).

Following a logical order, the World Soul first made time and the cosmos, then put "itself" into time (quotation 4) – or as Jonas translates the text, "temporalized herself"[54]– and finally immersed the world of sense in time. Plotinus explains this last – "For since the world of sense moves in Soul – there is no other place of it (this universe) than Soul – it moves also in the time of Soul". In putting "itself" in time, the World Soul copies the hypostasis soul, whose movement was the "first to enter time" in III.7(45).13. Time in turn is *in* soul – in fact, in every consubstantial soul and in the same form (III.7(45).13). However in IV.4(28).15 Plotinus tells us that neither the World Soul nor individual souls are in time, but only the things they generate. For the World Soul this is the physical world and for individual souls, their affections and the things they make. Souls are everlasting with time posterior to them. Moreover, what is "in time" is less than time itself.

In reconciling IV.4(28).15 with III.7(45).11 perhaps Smith's distinction between "real time" and "manifested time" is relevant. As in IV.4(28).15, here in III.7(45).11 too the World Soul is not in "manifested time" – only its product, the world of sense is. Thus Smith concludes that soul is not "in time" – that is, not in the time perceived in the physical world where things are "in time". The world of sense is in soul. Since the life of soul is time, the physical world is also "in time".[55] Yet, insofar as the time *qua* life of World Soul is "real time", Plotinus reasoning – that the cosmos is in World Soul and thus in the time of Soul – points to the conclusion that the cosmos is in "real time", whereas it should, in fact, be in "manifested time", as Smith asserts and IV.4(28).15 makes abundantly clear. A second puzzle concerns soul's self-temporalization. In what sense do the hypostasis soul (Chapter 13) and World Soul (Chapter 11) "enter" time? As Gerson points out, the "striking phrase", "put itself into time" as applied to soul should not be taken literally, for it does not mean that soul "caused itself to be".[56] Smith concludes that all soul is strictly not "in time". But the corporeal, "when regarded as ensouled involves, as it were, the lower soul with it in its being 'in time'".[57] Likewise, Torchia also notes that it would be erroneous to maintain that "Soul" "*entered into*" time or even "*descended into*" the material cosmos, for such

[53] Smith, "Soul and Time", 340–341, 343–4. Smith, 343 notes that Blumenthal was right in contending that Schwyzer was wrong when he saw two kinds of reasoning power in Plotinus.

[54] H. Jonas, "The Soul in Gnosticism and Plotinus", in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris: 1971), 51.

[55] Smith, "Eternity and time, 210.

[56] Gerson, 124.

[57] Smith, "Soul and Time", 336, 344.

assertions imply that time exists independently of "Soul" – which is not the case for Plotinus.[58] Perhaps soul's pre-temporal, sempiternal discursion temporalizes itself at all levels of soul, only in this sense that soul and time are one – for as the life of soul, time is identified with the activity of soul (III.7(45).12), establishing thereby more than a continuum between progenitor (soul) and progeny (time).

Conclusion

Ennead III.7(45).11 is a blithe front for a complex cosmology, entailing modes of generation distinctly different from those pertaining to real beings, even as it is, in a general sense, a cameo of emanative *poiesis*. Plotinus' terse opening lines may be deciphered as follows. As it lies eternally in its *logoic* and seminal fore-life *with* eternity in real being, time participates in the genus rest. It appears eternally, when the seed of time is actualized in the realm of process. This appearance amounts to the uncoiling, unfurling, or "exteriorization" of the seed of time, to the discursive sequence of "before" and "after" that was latent in the seed. Using the four modes in which Intellect makes the world of sense, described in Chapter 8 of this book – through parts of soul, matter, nature, and directly, without any mediation of soul – Plotinus' cosmology in *Ennead* III.7(45).11 falls mainly within the purview of the first, for Intellect makes time and the universe through the entire edifice of soul. Any complicity with nature and matter is implicit.

However, there is here more an imitative, choral self-extrusion of the different levels of soul than a division of labor among different parts of soul. Instead of abiding unchanged and stable in contemplation in its highest noetic ground – and remaining non-demiurgic in this limited sense – the archetypal hypostasis soul is somewhat plebeian. It is *polupragmatic* and declines, but minimally – to the level of a sempiternal discursion – leading its species souls in the generation of time and the world of sense. In a literal sense it remains non-demiurgic for it does not decline so low as to begin deliberating before making or engaging in the distended thinking characteristic of human reasoning. Yet it is demiurgic in that it loses its prior stability, no longer abides unchanged, and declines when undergoing its *polupragmatic* nature. Any implicit planning by it, in its role as demiurge, remains that "planning-in-itself", Gurtler describes – a planning anterior to the actual division into bodies accomplished by the World Soul. Like the demiurge at the level of Intellect, that at the levels of the hypostasis soul or World Soul also does not descend to the discursiveness of human reasoning attendant upon *praxis* (as opposed to *poiesis*). It does not need to plan, form a hypothesis, foresee, or make deductions, for its product is not a combination of "plans and matter as separate and discrete elements, precisely because it does not work with an already existing contingent thing or things where alternatives and multiplicities are involved".

[58] Torchia, 74.

Instead, the sensible world is produced "as a whole", illustrating a modified form of Stoic sympathy. Demiurgic activity occurs within nature, "paralleling Stoic seminal reasons".[59]

[59] Gurtler, 105, 109.

Chapter 10

The Nature and Role of the Self ("We") in III.7(45).11

In III.7(45).11–13, Plotinus uses the pluralized self as metaphysical subject ("we") and object ("us"), for the construction and internal omnipresence of time respectively. As subjects, "we" construct time as an image of eternity (Chapter 11) and "we" hypothetically stop the activity of soul so that time is abolished (Chapter 12). In Chapter 13, we are also metaphysical objects – for time exists in an identical form in "us" – that is, in every soul of like kind. Thus, despite the frequency of the rhetorical device of the lecturer's "we",[1] Plotinus' metaphysical "we" is perhaps by far the more significant in III.7(45), although where it lies among the manifold levels of the "we" in the *Enneads* is not immediately evident. Is it defined only at the human level, or does it include the supra-human species level of *all* souls – including irrational ones? If so, does the species "we" operate at the level of its common indwelling genus and is its plurality only a phantasm? Only a closer examination of the Plotinian "we" can answer such questions. Accordingly, this chapter has the following sections: (1) What the "We" means in the *Enneads*, (2) The Nature of "We" in III.7(45).11, and (3) How "We" make Time in III.7(45).11.

What the "We" means in the *Enneads*

The Plotinian "we" pertains essentially to the level of reason in man – as what "we" ourselves are – and has a broader meaning in terms of what is "ours". Yet it is also mobile. It traverses our interiority existentially and at each level it is determined at that aspect of the self that we concentrate on through our consciousness. Blumenthal suggests that the "we" is normally to be found at the level of discursive reason, the summit of the sensible man. However this "mobile" "we" can also have a place in the intelligible world. Its very mobility makes it unsuitable as an ultimate basis of the individual's existence or personality.[2]

[1] Most commentators take this lecturer's "we" to include Plotinus' colleagues as well as the audience.

[2] See H.J. Blumenthal, "Did Plotinus believe in Ideas of Individuals?" in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 61.

Oosthout notes that like his predecessors, Plotinus takes the essence of what "we" are, or man (*anthrôpos*), to be primarily man's reasoning power, echoing Plato – that man is essentially the soul (*Alcibiades* 130c) and that the key part of the human soul is reason (*Republic* IV, 441e) – and Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* X, 1178a) – that each of us is essentially the power of reasoning, which is the best and most important part of the human being. Yet, in its broader sense, "we" not only think, but also perceive. Moreover, "we" are living creatures, in which the psychical operates though biological organs. Unlike thinking (discursive reason), which we use always, even when we are unaware of it, perception is *ours* because we can make use of it, but do not always do so. Similarly, the "pure" or "upper" mind is not "we" ourselves – but *ours*, for we do not always use the "notions" that comprise it.[3] Thus Oosthout concludes that "we" are the whole of our psychical activities, among which, the most definitive is the power of reasoning that distinguishes us from other living creatures. Yet, the "we" also includes functions that man shares with these living creatures – such as perception and the vegetative functions.[4]

While the "we" may be primarily at the level of discursive reason, its subjective mobility – and our ability to determine it through consciousness – may hoist it above or below reason. For Hadot, our reason helps us discover the existence of the two extreme levels of the self – in God and in the life of the body – and this introspection also authenticates our selves. We will not *be* what we really *are* until we become aware of these levels. Hadot and Schürmann note the paradox of the human self – that while we only *are* that of which we are aware, we are aware of having been more fully *ourselves* precisely in those moments of inner simplicity in which we lose self-awareness. Thus consciousness is not our most precious faculty, for the more intense an activity is, the less conscious it is.[5]

Concerning the level of interiority at which consciousness determines the "we", through its focus – the possibilities are endless.[6] Plotinus sums up this panoramic

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[3] Plotinus makes the further point in V.3 (49).3, that while sense-perception is always "ours" – for we are always perceiving – there is disagreement about Intellect, both because we do not always use it and because it is separate, insofar as it does not decline to us. We look up to it. Moreover, insofar as "something" of "our soul" lingers in the intelligible (IV.8(6).8), the intellective aspect of the psychic "we" should be ever active, even if we do not always use the upper mind.

[4] H. Oosthout, *Modes of Knowledge and the Transcendental: An Introduction to Plotinus Ennead 5.3 [49]* (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1991), 34–5.

[5] P. Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, trans. M. Chase (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 29, 32; R. Schürmann, "The Philosophy of Plotinus. Doctor Reiner Schürmann's Course Lectures", inventory established by Pierre Adler (New York: The New School for Social Research, Department of Philosophy, 1994, photocopied), 8.

[6] As Oosthout, 33–4, notes, the general term that Plotinus uses for the pure acquisition of information is "apprehension". When the information in question is about the activity of the psycho-corporeal system itself, then Plotinus often – but not always – uses "consciousness" or "awareness".

quasi-ontological range of the "we" – from eternity through time – when he says in III.7(45).7: "We too, then, must have a share in eternity. But how can we, when we are in time?" Yet it is not as if the same "we" is at once eternal and temporal, for they differ in composition. The "we" *qua* individual souls is eternal at the noetic species level, but temporal principally at the lower discursive level of the *eidôlon*. The affections of individual souls and the things they make are in time (IV.4(28).15). A close examination of the *Enneads* shows that inasmuch as the Plotinian self is flexible, so is the mobile "we".[7] Its manifold levels are in three categories:

First, the noetic and sempiternal "we":

1. The incipient noetic "we", which includes different types of beings ("men who were different", "pure souls", *et. al.*) (VI.4(22).14);
2. The "we" who have a share in eternity (III.7(45).7);
3. The ascendant "we", who are to receive the One by setting "our Intellect" to it (III.8(30).9) and are "put on the way" to the One by purifications and by establishing ourselves in the stronghold of the intelligible (VI.7(38).36);
4. The fallen, discursive, sempiternal "we" that constructs time as an image of eternity (III.7(45).11), within which time exists in an identical form (Chapter 13).

Second, the immanent and historical "we":

5. The embryonic conjoint of the ideal Intelligible man and the "other" man who encrusts himself around "us" and the still lower "we" that comprises only the latter (VI.4(22).14);
6. The historical self, or *eidôlon*, or shade of Heracles, which is part of "our self" (IV.3(27).27), exists "in time" (III.7(45).7), is embodied (II.9(33).18), and is described as the "principal part of the soul", in the middle, between Intellect and sense-perception (V.3(49).3);
7. The higher immanent variations of the "we": "our soul", which does not altogether come down from the intelligible – something of it always remains there (IV.8(6).8); the "we ourselves", which refers to the dominant and essential part of us (IV.4(28).18) and not the qualified body, even though it depends on us; the authentic "we", capable of mastering our passions or "just that which we really are" (II.3(52).9); the higher "we" that transcends the body even in the embodied state (1.1(53).10); "ourselves" as beings outside the realm of sense-perception (V.1(10).10); the whole form of the "we" determined as "man", in virtue of its better rational part (III.4(15).2), although the two lower parts (perceptive and vegetative) are also present and the rational part does not always dominate.

[7] See Chapter 5 of this book.

8. The manifold transmigratory levels attained by the "they", according to the disposition they guarded best in themselves (III.4(15).2) and the varying echelons of the internally mobile "we" that include even "what comes before the middle" and are each actualized, when as potent subjects, "we" direct "our" middle part to it. (I.1(53).11)

Third, the lowest "we":

9. The lower "we" that includes the ensouled body. (1.1(53).10)

As the level of the "we" alters, so does its composition. Thus the noetic ascendant "we" includes the cosmic and intelligible All, whereas the noetic incipient "we" includes classes of beings ("men who are different", gods *et. al.*), unified by the transcendental man. Of the varying levels of the historical self, it is not the higher intellective "we", but only the ordinary *eidôlon* – in between Intellect and sense-perception (V.3(49).3) – that pertains to the level of the lower discursive reason in man. All of these nine instances of the "we" from the *Enneads* – with the possible exception of (4) – pertain definitively to the human soul. None of them includes the "we" most relevant for III.7(45).11 – that corresponding to the species counterparts of *all* particular souls, even irrational ones. Although Plotinus never directly applies the "we" to the species souls when he describes their appearance in IV.3(27).2, 5, a species "we" can be inferred and used in III.7(45).11. Plotinus' definition of "us" as "every soul of this kind", in III.7(45).13 and his assertion that time exists in an identical form (*homoeidôs*) in all such consubstantial souls, suggest that the "we" who construct time in III.7(45).11 is a species "we" or "we" *qua* species souls.[8] This thesis is supported further by the highly abstract level of soul that Plotinus involves in this genesis – the unity of souls at the level of the hypostasis soul, which transcends wholly the human level and cannot be anthropomorphized.

[8] The interpretation of this *poietic* "we" as the consubstantial species souls is strengthened further by IV.1(21).2, where Plotinus argues that soul cannot be divisible like bodies. If it were, then "innumerable" souls "separate from each other" – thus lacking consubstantiality – would direct this universe and not one soul. This indicates that in order to direct the universe, souls have to be *actively* consubstantial – in short they have to be the species souls operating at the level of their common indwelling genus. If the mere "direction" of this universe calls for consubstantiality of souls, a far stronger case can be made for the "making" of the universe. Thus for souls to be *poietic*, they must operate as consubstantial species souls, at the level of their corresponding *poietic* species "we".

The Nature of "We" in III.7(45).11

Although its significance has been disputed, many commentators have interpreted the progenitor "we" (in III.7(45).11) metaphysically, taking it to comprise the collective of individual rational souls at their core identity with the hypostasis soul and the World Soul.[9] Manchester, Strange, Smith and Schürmann have implicitly noted the complicity of the genus-species structure of soul in the genesis of time and the cosmos and identified the key maker of time as the hypostasis soul. For Strange, the "we" pertains to the individual rational soul. In Chapter 13, it is the hypostasis soul that generates time. "We" can be identified with the hypostasis soul, on account Plotinus' doctrine of the unity of soul.[10] For Smith, the "we" in III.7(45).11 is more than merely expository – it has a metaphysical import and comprises individual souls as "part" of the hypostasis soul. "We" do not determine time in our capacity as humans. As individual souls "we" are subsumed in the "totality of soul", and it is through the World Soul that time is directly "communicated" to the world.[11]

Although Schürmann defines the "we", which is stirred to ceaseless succession prior to our making of time, in terms of *human* souls, he takes the significance of this "we" to lie ultimately in its hidden metaphysical meaning, reminding us that Plotinus emphasizes the identity between the One as hypostasis and the One in us, the "Mind" or Intellect as hypostasis and the Mind in us, and the Soul as hypostasis and the soul in us. Schürmann understands Plotinus' claim – "we shall produce time by means of the form and nature of what comes after" (III.7(45).11) – to mean that "we" perform the generation of time, in the "egression" of soul from Intellect.

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[9] There are some exceptions. W. Beierwaltes argues that this "we" refers to Plotinus and his colleagues. See A. Smith, "Eternity and time", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 215, note 27. P. Manchester discerns between "hypostasis Soul", and individual souls (which include the soul of the All or World Soul) and recognizes the genus-species structure of soul at work, when he suggests that souls do not "bring about" time as individuals, but only as instances of "soul at large" (*pasa psuchê*); but he takes "we" to be – not individual souls (*hai psuchai*) – but the editorial we, which includes both lecturer and audience. In Chapter 11, "we" do not in fact construct time, but "we" say we do, as a surrogate for "I have constructed myself", on behalf of time. Manchester is clear that it is only certain 'parts' of the hypostasis soul which constitute time in Chapter 11 – "Busy Nature and Restless Power". See P. Manchester, "Time and the Soul in Plotinus, III 7 [45], 11", *Dionysius* 2 (1978): 120–121. Gloy, 304, thinks that the World Soul and not the individual soul is the generator of time. See K. Gloy, "Die Struktur der Zeit in Plotins Zeittheorie", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 71 (1989): 303–26.

[10] S.K. Strange, "Plotinus on the Nature of Eternity and Time", in *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*, L.P. Schrenk (ed.) (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 49–50.

[11] Smith, 209–11.

This reading establishes a metaphysical identity between the individual self and the World Soul[12] that comes out of Intellect.[13] Thus the "we" who generate time are not literally at the human level, but identified with the World Soul. Although Schürmann does not directly claim so, this can only be the transcendental species level of souls.

By identifying the individual self *qua* soul with the level of the World Soul and the hypostasis soul, Strange, Smith and Schürmann all implicate the actualization of the potential genus within each species soul. By positing the "we" at the level of the individual rational soul and identifying it with the hypostasis soul (Strange), subsuming it in the totality of soul (Smith), or identifying it metaphysically with the World Soul that emerges from Intellect (Schürmann) – they are implicitly locating the "we" at the level of species souls. Strange's association of the "we" with rationality pertains at the very least to the species level, for even the "indivisible" part of soul – or the indwelling genus – must be on the "rational" level (IV.9(8).3). Moreover, Plotinus himself rules out human status and implicates the indwelling soul-genus in V.8(31).7, when he notes that it is only when man ceases to be man and comes to belong to the *whole* that he "makes" the whole.[14] Thus the "we" cannot be the collective of mere human souls, for the locus at which it operates cosmologically is the abstract and supra-human level of egression of soul from Intellect and the identification of our individual souls with the World Soul and the hypostasis soul.

Interpreting the members of the "we" in III.7(45).11–13 as *all* species souls – at a supra-human noetic level beyond the lowest discursive reason – is not inconsistent with IV.3(27).2, 5, for the "partial" souls in the latter are too abstract to be anthropomorphized. It appears then that: (1) the species level is *implicit* in the ontologically lower incarnate and discarnate individual souls, (2) the broadest definition of the psychic bearer of the "we" should extend beyond the human level to include the species souls of irrational non-humans like plants, birds and animals, and (3) there should be a supra-human species "we" corresponding to the comprehensive embodied "we" and extending beyond it to include discarnate

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[12] Armstrong indicates as much when he suggests that "we" are souls – "parts" of universal soul and already present in it, as it moves out of eternity and produces time. However, he also suggests that this may be only the lecturer's "we". See *Plotinus Ennead III*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 338–9, note 1.

[13] See Schürmann, 47–8. This is only the first of two "readings" (of Plotinus' claim) suggested by Schürmann – that "we shall produce time by means of the form and nature of what comes after" (III.7(45).11). In the second reading, we reproduce the generation of time only in our reflection. Thus we do not actually produce time – rather, we *reproduce* it theoretically. Schürmann prefers the first reading, but infuses strains of the second into the first when he concludes that once "my soul" is particularized, "I" recreate in reflection, what "I" created in being, in the state of identity with the World Soul.

[14] Alluding to Plato's *Phaedrus* (246C1–2), Plotinus adds that only such a self-transcendent man also "directs the whole universe".

particular souls. Yet, Plotinus' thoughts on the individuation of sub-human souls are too nuanced for the composition of the "we" to be that clear-cut. It remains arguable whether *all* entities of the world of sense are individuated enough to have corresponding species souls that can comprise the species "we". It is not at all clear that those entities besouled *only* by the growth soul (like plants) have distinct individual souls – for this lowest vegetative soul is common to all who share in it. Plotinus seems to intimate this very point in IV.4(28).27 when he asserts: "Each part has a trace of the generative soul, and the whole power of growth is diffused over this, and belongs no more to this part or that, but to the whole earth". Again in III.4(15).2, when souls of erstwhile humans descend culpably to the level of plants, they are matched – not merely with bodies of plants – but also with their characteristic disposition of dullness of perception. However, Plotinus attributes such rebirth, not to traits that individuate plant souls, but to the predominance of the growth principle in them – a principle that is the hallmark of *all* plants. Thus it appears that members of a comprehensive species "we" will have corresponding embodied souls, but these will be no lower than souls of animals. Once the individuation of soul ceases in the realm of embodiment, a species soul can no longer have its embodied counterpart. If individual souls cannot be distinguished in plants, how can plants have species antecedents that contribute to the species "we"?

In his discussions of the transmigration (III.4(15).2–3) and immortality of souls, Plotinus seems to attribute to birds, animals and generally the sub-human level excluding plants, each their individual souls – although, what descends to their levels are often erstwhile humans. When human souls are reborn culpably as birds or animals, they are matched with the dispositions characteristic of the latter – dispositions that indicate shades of their *individuated* souls and derive from levels above the common growth soul. Thus, those who loved music but were otherwise respectable are reborn as song-birds. Plotinus appears to draw a transmigratory continuum among rational and irrational souls. Depending on their dispositions, human souls can ascend along this continuum and be reborn as rational men, spirits or gods or descend to the sub-human level of irrational wild animals, plants and song birds, among others. This implies that the distinction between rational and irrational souls is not absolute, the soul which is rational in one life can descend to the irrational level in another life, and the two might possess a common species antecedent that belongs to the species "we".

But what of souls that are genuinely non-human and distinct from fallen humans in sub-human guises? In I.1(53).11, Plotinus makes a distinction between "brute beasts" that have erstwhile sinful human souls in them and those that do not. In the case of the former, the "separable part of the soul" is somewhat detached in them – it "does not come to belong to the beasts but is there without being there for them; their consciousness includes the image of soul and the body". Such a beast is a "qualified body made … by an image of soul". In the case of a beast bereft of a

human soul, it becomes "a living being of such and such a kind by an illumination from the universal soul".

Like the "we" at the level of the human soul – and not the body (IV.7(2).1) – those souls of "other living things" which have been "failures" and come into animals' bodies must also be immortal (IV.7(2).14). The "other living things" here seem to include at least some non-humans and their purported failure indicates that even non-human souls can fail. However, "another [non-human] kind of soul" – presumably souls that are truly non-human and not souls of fallen humans – comes from "the nature which lives" and causes life in living things. Plotinus adds that the same is true of the soul in plants – it too comes from what is purportedly the growth soul. Presumably it derives its immortality from that of the latter. So far it seems as if Plotinus has ceased to individuate the "[non-human] kind" of souls, for he derives them from the common growth soul. However, at this juncture he individuates them by using "they" to depict what are presumably the consubstantial bodiless and partless species antecedents of the non-human kinds of soul, when he claims "they all started from the same origin and have their own life and they too are bodiless and without parts and substances". Thus it would appear that species souls do exist for irrational non-human souls – and not just for human souls. Souls are individuated at the *species* level – even in the case of plants – notwithstanding their common origin in the growth soul. The case for animals is less difficult, for the individuation of their souls – beyond the growth soul they share in common with other living things – is guaranteed by the predominance of the power of sense-perception in them (V.2(11).2). Unlike the vegetative level, sense-perception calls for a degree of individuation of souls.[15] However, Plotinus is not consistent even for humans as to what perceptive functions come to us from the World Soul and what from the individual soul.[16] Thus, the preponderance of sense-perception in animals, does not necessarily guarantee the individuation of their souls above the level of the growth soul. Yet, in V.2(11).2 Plotinus indicates clearly that there are individuated plant souls and in VI.7(38)8–11 plants and animals are already individuated when they are anticipated in the intelligible, thus affirming the possibility of that which is lower – the individuated species level for each of them. When Plotinus notes that "we" have a share in eternity although we are in time

[15] Citing Plato's *Phaedo* (66B5), Plotinus tells us that the nature of sense-perception, which is above the diffused vegetative level, is no longer "mixed up with the body" but in contact with it from *above* (IV.4(28).27). The italics are mine.

[16] As Emilsson notes, Plotinus is not consistent on what psychic functions in us come from the World Soul. Sometimes only the vegetative functions are included, sometimes also other functions. In IV.9(8).3, the passively perceptive vegetative soul is from the World Soul but the perception which judges with the aid of intellect comes from the individual soul. But from IV.3(27).27–31, it may be inferred that more of our psychic faculties come from the World Soul than that indicated in IV.9(8).3. See E. K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Sense-Perception: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 26–7.

(III.7(45).7) and that "souls" – and not just "human souls" – are eternal (IV.4(28).15), this must implicate *all* species souls. Souls which are irrational in time cannot remain irrational at their species levels – they must be noetic, eternal and immortal.

On all these grounds, it seems reasonable to conclude that the metaphysical and cosmological "we" in III.7(45).11 comprises *all* species souls – including those of irrational non-humans like plants, birds and animals. Blumenthal and Deck point out that in general, star souls can rule their bodies without contamination. Thus they should be grouped with the World Soul and not with other particular souls because they share the World Soul's immunity from disturbance.[17] However, in the context of the genesis of time, the "we" should include the species antecedents of even star souls, for the construction of time occurs at the level of the genus within the species souls. Yet this meticulous tracing of the lineage of embodied souls to their species counterparts is somewhat futile if "we" are actualizing the genus when we construct time, for the very plurality of the "we" is open to question. Insofar as it reverts ultimately to this *single* indwelling soul-genus, the "we" cannot be operationally plural – it has to have divested itself of its plurality. It is perhaps in this sense that the individual souls comprising this "we" are, as Smith suggests, *subsumed* in the totality of soul.[18]

How "We" make Time in III.7(45).11

Taking the "we" to be the ensemble of species souls, the earliest inkling of a progenitor "we" appears at the inception of III.7(45).11, when Plotinus declares the "we" as the first *poietic* subject of this chapter, thus implying that the species members of the "we" are already in existence and the particularization of species souls from the genus has already taken place:

1. Time did not yet exist, not at any rate for the beings of that world; we shall produce time by means of the form and nature of what comes after. (III.7(45).11)

To decipher the enigmatic "form and nature of what comes after" the "after" has to be decoded – after what? From the first sentence the "after" seems to pertain to "that world" or the world of real beings, for which time – at rest in its fore-life – did not yet exist. Thus, "we" are to produce time by means of instruments that are logically posterior to the noetic realm. The key causative – but not generative –

[17] Blumenthal, "Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul in Plotinus", in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 59–60; J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 37.

[18] The italics are mine. See Smith, 210.

instruments that "we" use to produce time are the eternal, *tolmatic* "restlessly active nature" of the hypostasis soul and its unquiet power, which are both posterior to "that world" and the fore-life of time. These do not beget time, but they induce and characterize the fall of the soul which leads, through a logical sequence, to the construction of time. More specifically, the "form" and "nature" pertain perhaps to the discursive state of the "we", a state which is posterior to the noetic realm.[19]

Later in the same chapter – within time's purported answer to the query about how it appears – Plotinus fulfills his promise in quotation 1. As promised, "we" do indeed produce or "construct" time:

2. And so, always moving on to the "next" and the "after", and what is not the same, but one thing after another, we made a long stretch of our journey and constructed time as an image of eternity". (III.7(45).11)

Like the rest of this chapter, this passage too is, as it were, a cryptic scene from a larger play. Some themes to unlock are: (1) how this passage compares with IV.4(28).15–17 and whether the "we" constructs also the world of sense; (2) the endurance, type and nature of the discursion of this "we", and its relationship with the genus-species structure of soul; (3) exactly what is *poietic* about the "we" and what its construction of time amounts to; (4) whether the species souls actualize their genus to make time and if so, how; (5) what the relationship is between the species "we" and the historical "we" in this quotation.

Quotation 2 seems to contradict IV.4(28).15–17, where it is not our souls, or "we" but the World Soul that makes time. This has already been noted by Strange, who resolves this seeming inconsistency by citing Plotinus' doctrine of the unity of soul, which justifies the identification of the "we" with the hypostasis soul – the ultimate generator of time.[20] Also, in this quotation "we" make only time. No mention is made of the world of sense. Yet, insofar as the two are co-generated, "we" should be making both. This is attested by Schürmann, who notes that taking the "we" to have generated time in the egression of soul from Intellect indicates that "we" have also created the universe and everything visible, for the sensible world comes into being along with time.[21] In his other cosmological passages, Plotinus usually cites Intellect, the hypostasis soul, the World Soul or nature as the immediate makers of the world of sense – and not "we". An exception is V.1(10).2, where the *poietic* role of "every soul" is explicit. Perhaps this ascertains

[19] Schürmann, 47, interprets "by means of the form and nature of what comes after", very differently. In one interpretation he suggests that "we" are the "latecomers" after the generation of time out of eternity; by the "nature" of the afterwards we are in time and by its "form" or "concept" we reenact the generation of time from eternity – not actually producing time – but theoretically reproducing time.

[20] Strange, 49–50.

[21] Schürmann, 47.

what is implicit in III.7(45).11 – that "we" make not only time, but also the world of sense.

To understand the discursion of the "we" in quotation 2 and its relationship with its *poietic* activity, its lineage has to be traced to the anterior discursion of the World Soul and the hypostasis soul – characterized in Chapter 11, as the "ordered succession" of activity that the World Soul generates along with the succession itself, and in 13 as the linear "everlasting progression" of the hypostasis soul, divided into equal intervals. In the lines preceding this quotation, before the "we" moves, the hypostasis soul ("this") and time – which is as yet in its *logoic* fore-life – have already stirred from their noetic rest. Spurred by its *tolmatic* "restlessly active nature", which reverberates through volitional mimesis in the whole edifice of soul, soul has already launched into its discursive movement.[22] That the movement by the hypostasis soul is logically prior to that by the "we" is in keeping with the chronology of the edifice of soul. As its ontological prior, soul should indeed move logically "before" the "we" does.

Thus the overall logical order of this phase of the procession should be as follows. First the genus makes or particularizes its individual species souls. Then, it undergoes its *tolmatic* restless nature in response to which it extrudes by moving discursively. The activity it irradiates now flows in a discursive format. As the genus commences its timeless or sempiternal discursion, its species souls follow suit, for what is predicated of the genus must be predicated of its species. This overall descent into discursion is eternal because time has not yet been constructed. The movement of the genus at the zenith of this nascent edifice resounds through the entire structure and is echoed by the movement of the World Soul as also by the "we" at the base, for the subject now changes to the "we". The mutual awakening of soul and time, from their noetic rest, reverberates imitatively and causes the "we" *qua* individual species souls to engage in the movement of discursion described in quotation 2. The next logical step is for the hypostasis soul to generate time. After that, the by now discursive "we" copies the genus and "constructs" time. Thus time is posterior to our souls, as Plotinus points out, in IV.4(28).15 and clearly posterior to the particularization of the individual species souls from soul-genus.

In quotation 2, the movement of the "we" is replete with indelible marks of discursion – priority, succession, sequence, and extension from the "next" to the "after" to "what is not the same, but one thing after another", which Plotinus usually sums up with the cryptic chronology of "before" (*proteron*) and "after" (*husteron*).[23] That the "we" is copying the hypostasis soul is evident in its very manner of moving. From III.7(45).13, we know that the movement of the hypostasis soul is "everlasting". Imitating this sempiternity, we move *always*. Both

[22] See Chapter 12 of this book for soul's *tolma* and its effects.

[23] Plotinus characterizes the discursion in material things by the sequence of "this after that" (IV.4(28).16).

"everlasting" and "always" pertain to the higher discursion of soul, posterior to eternity, but prior to time and thus perdurable – not eternally – but sempiternally.[24] After appearing in its species guise from the hypostasis soul, the "we" descends, along with the World Soul and launches into discursion, because the entire edifice of soul – taking its cue from soul-genus – has thus descended and commenced the pre-cosmic, sempiternal discursion characteristic of higher – but not the highest – soul. This raises a new question – do the individual souls that comprise the "we" remain at the species level, once the "we" begins its discursion? Having lost their non-discursive stature, clearly they are no longer at their highest incipient noetic state. But insofar as the hypostasis soul and the World Soul retain their respective status as genus and species, even when they descend from the highest eternal noetic to the sempiternal discursive stage, so should the individual species souls. Thus, in its fallen discursive state the "we" should continue to comprise the now discursive individual species souls.

The distention of our movement, across the sequence of the "next" and the "after" has lengthened our "journey" – but in comparison with what? The comparison Plotinus has in mind here must be "our" prior, compact, non-discursive journeying at the peak noetic species level. Since "journey" itself connotes *duratio* – and *duratio* can be discursive or non-discursive – and since the prior existence of "our" journey is implicit in quotation 2, a journey now "stretched" or lengthened by the discursive "we" – the erstwhile life of the "we", before its fall to the state of discursion must exclude those duration-free aspects of noetic life that Plotinus depicts in chapters like IV.4(28).1, as also later in III.7(45).11, when he describes eternity as a "life at rest, unchanging and identical". To understand what may be lost in the distention or exteriorization caused when "we made a long stretch of our journey", it helps to recall VI.6(34).1, where Plotinus warns that "the journey to the exterior is foolish or compulsory".

Imitating its priors, the discursive movement of the "we" is apparently *poietic*. In Chapter 13, the hypostasis soul first launches into an everlasting discursion and then its very movement generates time – "this movement of soul ... generated time". In 11, what is presumably the World Soul unravels itself to a weaker extension and moves in imitation of noetic motion – and makes the world of sense and time. In quotation 2, "we" retain this exact order – "we" first move discursively and then construct time, thus reflecting the ontological priority of soul to time, established earlier in IV.4(28).15, when Plotinus asserts that individual souls are "everlasting" and time posterior to them.[25] Like the hypostasis soul, "we" first engage in a post-eternal, pre-temporal, sempiternal, logical discursion and then make time as an image of eternity.

[24] See Chapter 4 of this book for the discursion of soul.

[25] Here I am using Smith's translation in "Eternity and time", 212, where he describes souls as "everlasting". In Armstrong's translation, souls are "eternal".

Exactly how do "we" *make* time? Questions about the *poietic* roles of the hypostasis soul and the World Soul from Chapter 9 of this book now resound with respect to the "we". How is the discursive movement of the "we" related to its *poietic* role in the construction of time? Why should motion in itself be fecund? What is it about the "we" *per se* that constructs time? In terms of Plotinus' usual cosmological script, it should be the *logoi* bequeathed by the "we" that effect the generative act – and not its motion as such. In quotation 2, the discursive movement of the "we" logically presages its construction of time. Yet, why should mere logical precedence amount to causative precedence? Can the discursive movement of the "we", on its own, actually *cause*, or rather *beget* time? Taking time during its fore-life – when it was at rest with eternity in real being and had not yet produced its own discursion – to be the "seed" or *spermatic logos* of time, as Schürmann does,[26] implies that all "we" do when "we" "construct" time is actualize this *logos* in the realm of becoming, by using "our" activity to define and generate time.[27] Unlike Plotinus' usual *poietic* script, which requires the progeny to receive form by returning in contemplation to the progenitor, here time (the progeny) cannot directly contemplate the "we" (the immediate progenitor). Instead, "we" *construct* time when "we" use our discursive down-flow of activity to transmit the *logos* or seed of time from its noetic locus to the realm of process. "We" arouse it from its noetic rest and induce it to appear in the form of the discursive flow of "before" and "after" that time itself produces. In its turn, time is *constructed* by the "we" when its *logos* is realized in the realm of process as the life of soul. "We" do not cause the discursive format in time. "We" cause time to unfurl, so that its latent discursion manifests itself. Time itself "produces" its own "before" and anticipates its "after" as it unravels into discursive sequence. Unlike the generation of the world of sense, which implicates the matter of the sense-world, the generation of incorporeal time has no basis in matter.

Here it is important to discern between the discursive reason of the "we" and its discursive down-flow of *poietic* activity. While discursive reason applies mainly to sensible man, at levels that transcend the body, discursion itself can apply to noetic soul and self. Thus the species level transcends discursive reason – yet sustains its capacity for discursion as such. Discursive reason lacks the contemplative wherewithal with which to beget time, for it engages in a search before reaching its object. Hence Plotinus usually associates discursive reason with *praxis* and not *poiesis*. However, the activity of soul – and not its discursive format – indeed has the fecundity with which to beget time. In Chapter 12 Plotinus tells us that the exteriorized activity of the "always existing" soul lies in "making and producing". The discursion of the "we" in quotation 2 then pertains – not to

[26] Schürmann, 49.

[27] "Actualize" may not be the best term to use, for what we have here is the reverse of noetic actualization. Here, the *logos* of time is descending and appearing in the realm of process as the life of soul and the manifested time of physics.

discursive reason – but to the flow of the *activity* of the "we". Thus it is not its movement, distended "journey", or discursive mode *per se*, but the activity emanating from the "we" in a discursive format that *causes* and *begets* time by constructing it. This fecund activity of the "we" echoes the discursive *poietic* activity produced by the hypostasis soul and the still prior down-flow of *poietic* activity from Intellect. The activity of the "we" constitutes the anterior backdrop that defines or *enforms* time without being distinct from it[28] – for time *is* this flowing life which possesses continuity of activity – "… the activity is time" (Chapter 12).

"We" "construct" time by transmitting its *logos* to the iconic realm of becoming, awakening it, as it were, from its rest with eternity.[29] Time stirs into discursion *with* the hypostasis soul, indicating that the "we" operates at the level of this genus when it constructs time. Thus commentators are right when they locate this construction at the level of the unity of soul. All *logoi* exist within each level of soul – the hypostasis, the World Soul and each species soul. Yet their full power can lie only in the hypostasis soul, which is the seat of the *logoi* within the compound of soul. The genus is merely *potential* in the species souls. Perhaps its actualization is rendered all the more significant by the result thereof: the fullest activation of the fecundity of the *logoi*. Thus, although Plotinus claims "each soul possesses all the forming principles in the universe" (V.7(18).1) – so that "we" are bearers of *all* the *logoi* and activity of the genus – "we" may need to actualize the genus to utilize the full power of the *logoi* and execute the construction of time with the greatest fecundity and efficacy. It may be inferred that just as Intellect bequeaths the *logoi* to the hypostasis soul, this genus, in turn, supplies its species with the *logoi*. All the *logoi*, which are present in the World Soul, will be present in each individual soul, but with this difference – all are not simultaneously active there. The power of *logos* and the *logoi* should be diminished at the level of the World Soul and further diminished at the level of other species souls. To be fully effectual in transmitting the *logos* of time from its noetic rest to the realm of process, "we" should more than likely be reverting to the genus within us and operate at the juncture of the unity of souls. *Logos* and the *logoi spermatikoi* should be more powerful and actual at this level – for here they are logically simultaneous in their presence and activity. To receive the full strength of the *logos*, the species souls should have to contemplate the genus and receive their complete form – the form that binds them in consubstantiality – and this should amount to the actualization of the potential genus within each species soul.

While Plotinus never describes the actualization of the potential genus within species souls, he does indicate the possible worth of other processes that

[28] In Strange's words, temporal succession is defined and generated "as a construction out of the process of discursive mental activity". Strange, 49.

[29] "Awakening" is a questionable term to use – for time is being projected to a lower level. Ideally, this term applies to contexts of noetic actualization.

approximate such actualization. In IV.9(8).5 he asserts that the "part" is "given power by a kind of approach to the whole". In III.9(13).2, he draws an analogy between the "discipline" with its different "single subjects of study", each containing the whole potentially – the whole which has the same principle and goal – and a man who must prepare himself so that "the principles in him are also his goals, and each as a whole and all together are directed to the best of his nature". Such actualization transports man to the higher world – "when he has become this, he is there [in the higher world]; for with this best of him, when he possesses it, he will grasp that [higher reality]". These examples reinforce the point already made – that individual species souls should derive their fullest power by reverting to their genus.

Yet what does it mean for a species soul to actualize its genus? At the very least it should imply that in the end, the plurality of the "we" is operationally phantasmal. The "we" who "construct" time are ultimately the actualized single genus within each of us. If this is indeed the case, then the "we" in quotation 2 is both declining as well as ascending. "We" are declining to our fallen state of discursion of activity. But to "construct" time, "we" are also ascending to the level of unity of soul, by eternally actualizing the *potential* genus within, or recovering our identity with the World Soul. Our descent is perhaps logically prior to our ascent. "We" first descend into discursion and then the discursive "we" ascends by reverting as a whole to the discursive genus – by rising from the level of the discursive particular souls assembled in the "we", to the level of the discursive genus within ourselves and the World Soul. This analysis reinforces the point made by commentators – that the hypostasis soul remains the key progenitor of time and the world of sense. Its *poietic* significance is enhanced insofar as "we" revert to it, so that in the end, it alone constructs time and the cosmos in its capacity as the actualized core in "us".

Exactly how do "we" actualize the genus? All that is clear from the *Enneads* is that soul-genus particularizes – and thus makes its species souls – and that it dwells within them without losing its quietude. Plotinus does not describe the reversal of this process – the actualization of the genus by its species souls – but only its opposite – the actualization of the part from the whole in reference to knowledge (IV.9(8).5). Thus we can only raise questions and speculate. How does a species soul ascend to the level of the genus within it and how does this differ from the introversion and spiritual ascent to the One by the aspiring historical self? Does "our" return amount to a potent predication of the genus by its species souls or does it mean participation in the genus? Is either adequate to actualize the potential genus? Although it cannot be part of the conscious, reflexive introversion of the historical self *qua* individual human soul, does the actualization of the genus by the species soul remain a form of noetic introversion?

Unlike the historical self *qua* soul, species souls are not immanent enough to be culpably introverted. Their return to the genus is not part of the hypostatic ascent of the former. Bereft as they are of accretions, they stand in no need of

purifications. Unlike the historical self, which ascends through discursive reason, to the non-discursive noetic level and even higher – through dialectic, love for the One, search for noetic beauty and renunciation of all but the One – species souls do not exert themselves consciously in this manner. Their return to the genus does not comprise what Armstrong describes as a "waking up to what we truly already are".[30] Like the World Soul, our species souls are exculpable in their separation from the genus, for this is decreed by emanative necessity. Equally, their return to the genus should also be exculpable and emanative – all the more since it is for the purpose of furthering the procession. Prompted neither by conversion nor mystical yearning and circumscribed by the ceiling of the genus or hypostasis soul, the degree of "introversion" – if this term even applies – the species souls need to revert to their genus should be minimal compared to the introversion required of culpable historical man.

This actualization of the potential genus by the species souls should occur by participation (*methexis*) and not predication, for this process is inherently ontological rather than epistemological or logical.[31] By participating in their genus, species souls should reverse the emanative logic incurred in their particularization and shed the dross of benign multiplicity they carry in excess of the genus, by withdrawing their erstwhile manifold ontological loci – the source of this multiplicity. Thus the species "we" in III.7(45) should first ascend exculpably, by emanative decree, by participating in the genus and thus actualizing it from its potentiality. It should then construct time with the full power of the *logoi* of the genus.[32]

A relationship between the historical "we" and the generative species "we" is implicit in quotation 2, for while this *poietic* claim is executed by the species "we", it is the historical "we" that makes this claim. Here Smith's distinction between the "soul-life" of time and the "entimed life of the embodied soul" is relevant.[33] "We" construct the "soul-life" of time, for the *poietic* "we" operates at the species level and not the level of the historical *eidôlon*. As historical subjects, "we" can only

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[30] A.H. Armstrong, " Salvation, Plotinian and Christian", in *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), 132.

[31] As Nikulin notes, participation is an ontological characteristic. It describes the way a thing *is* and why it is so. Citing the notion of participation in Boethius' *Quomodo substantiae*, Nikulin suggests further that participation is mostly used to establish a causal hierarchical relation between a thing in becoming and its noetic paradigm. Predication by contrast has to do with logical or epistemological description. See D. Nikulin, "Plotinus on Eternity", *Le Timée de Platon*, A. Neschke-Hentschke (ed.) (Paris: Éditions Peeters Louvain, 2000), 21–2.

[32] However, this ascent becomes culpable and conscious if the "we" includes historical man. In V.8(31).7 "man" makes the "whole", but only when he has ceased to be "man" and come to belong to the whole.

[33] See A. Smith, "Soul and Time in Plotinus", in *Psukhe – Seele – Anima*, J. Holzhausen (ed.) (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1998), 340.

recount – not through memory, but in reflection, through the medium of discursive reason – that this species "we" actualized its indwelling genus and constructed time. The temporal "we", amidst the "entimed life of the embodied soul", cannot literally experience these operations of the eternal species "we". Thus it is fitting to conclude with Schürmann's claim:

> When I still was one with the world soul I created time and everything visible, and now that my soul is particularized I recreate in reflection what I have thus created in being. We can only recreate, as late-comers, what we have created ourselves: this also maintains the delicate balance … between time as subjective and as objective; time is experienced and recreated subjectively only because it has been there already objectively – but this objective existence of time is due to 'me' within the universal soul.[34]

Conclusion

Rich in its archeological depth, the innocuous "we" of III.7(45).11 is more than a rhetorical device. It is a metaphysical "we", operating in its mimetic fallen discursive state, at the level of the individual species souls, which should include the species antecedents of *all* embodied souls – even irrational ones. "We" "construct" time by rousing the *logos* of time from its rest with eternity at the noetic level of the hypostasis soul and transmitting it to the iconic realm of becoming. The plurality of this "we" remains phantasmal, insofar as it actualizes the hypostasis soul – by participation rather than predication – and operates through this solitary soul-genus to construct time. Through the medium of discursive reason, the historical "we" *recalls* as it were, the *poietic* operations of the species "we", conducted in its state of identity with the hypostasis soul.

[34] Schürmann, 47.

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Chapter 11

Tolma, *Polupragmatic* Nature – Historical Roots and the Noetic Level

Plotinus inherits the Pythagorean idea of *tolma*, which inheres at all levels of generated beings in the *Enneads* – from Intellect to sensible matter – thus establishing itself as an irrational mark within a rational metaphysics. Alongside *tolma*, a second source of irrationality is soul's *polupragmatic* nature – a nature that connotes a pejorative busyness or restlessness. In Plotinus' cosmology *Ennead* III.7(45).11 stands out as the only chapter besides III.2(47).1, which refers directly to the disarray of *polupragmatic* activity. Here *tolma* is not used explicitly, yet soul's *polupragmatic* nature is replete with *tolmatic* hues. This is to be expected, for the conjoint genesis of time and the universe is embedded within a monistic emanation punctuated by *tolma*, but with this difference – begetting now loses its customary aura of silence amidst the *polupragmatic* cacophony of soul.[1] Plotinus juxtaposes contradictory phenomena – the genesis of the world of becoming alongside impedances that intone barrenness in a context of fecundity. The *tolmatic* restless nature of the hypostasis soul triggers, yet also tempers the lush fecundity of the genesis at hand.

While commentators like Armstrong point to *tolma* as the "root of all multiplicity",[2] matters are hardly that definitive or clear-cut. When it comes to the overall purpose and effects of *tolma* on Plotinian emanation, there is anything but certitude. While indeed a mark of irrationality, *tolma* may not be the primary source of otherness that distinguishes descending ranks of real beings and their images in the cascading emanation from the One. *Tolma* cannot *cause* the begetting that results in first otherness, for it expresses a will that thwarts contemplation of priors through audacious self-assertion. Thus, if anything, *tolma* reduces fecundity or the capacity for begetting. Not necessarily evil, yet *tolma* is

[1] As Schroeder notes, in Plotinus, the language of silence and "abiding" is used to describe how the source may generate without losing its unity and identity in division among its products. See F.M. Schroeder, *Form and Transformation: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 43.

[2] *Plotinus Ennead V*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 10, note 1.

inherently barren. Is *tolma* redundant to a prior, more seminal otherness that defines descending ranks? Does it preclude evil for real beings? These questions are explored in two sections: (1) Historical Antecedents, and (2) *Tolma* and Otherness of Intellect.

Historical Antecedents

As Armstrong points out, Plotinus' use of *tolma*, a "very Gnostic-sounding word", has a demonstrable Hellenic philosophical history underlying it.[3] Plotinus inherits this concept, which by the third century A.D., is already in wide circulation and has been used, with diverse connotations, by the Hellenic and Hellenistic traditions, Plato, the Neopythagorians, Middle Platonists, Alexandrians, Hermeticists, and Gnostics – as Torchia shows in his history of *tolma*.[4] Classical authors use *tolma* in a positive manner – to represent qualities like courage and endurance, in men and gods before the vicissitudes of fate and necessity. Thus in Plato, *tolma*-language designates courage in challenging accepted philosophical norms.

Tolma gains a pejorative connotation starting with the Neopythagoreans. Proclus, among others, tells us that the Pythagoreans actually used *tolma* to designate procession.[5] Armstrong notes that the Platonized Pythagoreans, who held that the Indefinite *Dyad* was not an "independent correlative principle", but produced in some way by the primal Monad, used *tolma* to name the *Dyad* (the principle of indefinite multiplicity).[6] In Neopythagoreanism, *tolma* is identified with the Indefinite *Dyad* and represents a will towards otherness and multiplicity in opposition to the unity of the One. Thus various members of the Neopythagorean school of Middle Platonism term the *Dyad* "*tolma*". As Rist and Torchia note, this identification of *tolma* with the *Dyad* implies that the emergence of plurality is

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[3] As Armstrong notes, Baladi and Rist have discussed thoroughly those passages in which Plotinus directly uses the *tolma* of Intellect and soul or language expressive of the same idea. See A.H. Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", in *Gnosis, Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978), 116. A more recent and comprehensive work is that by N.J. Torchia: *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Being* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993).

[4] Torchia, 11–36; Atkinson notes that *tolma* was a "semi-technical" term in two different metaphysical systems – that of the Pythagoreans and the Gnostics. M. Atkinson, *Plotinus Ennead V.1: On the Three Principal Hypostases* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 4.

[5] J.M. Rist, "Monism: Plotinus and Some Predecessors", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 69 (1965): 338.

[6] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 116. As Rist, 332, notes, Theophrastus ascribes the term "Indefinite *Dyad*" to the Pythagoreans – a term that arose in the Academy and perhaps with Plato himself.

now a sin and primal differentiation is now equated with evil, deficiency, and non-being.[7]

Thus, *tolma* now gains a "metaphysical and moral character". Torchia points out that this pejorative connotation is present even in Plotinus.[8] In III.8(30).8, Plotinus tells us that it would have been better if Intellect had never become second to the primal unity of the One.[9] In V.1(10).5 Intellect is the beginning of plurality and deficiency and Plotinus even uses "*dyad*" for Intellect in its unformed state, which, as Armstrong explains, is the indefinite life or sight that is the "first moment in the timeless formation of Intellect by procession from and return upon the One".[10] Yet, as Rist notes, for Plotinus, the Indefinite *Dyad* – or in Aristotelian terms, "intelligible matter" – itself is not *tolma* as it was for the Neopythagoreans and as Torchia adds, unlike his Neopythagorean predecessors and contemporaries, Plotinus never explicitly equates the *Dyad* with *tolma*, although he was probably aware of the traditional association of the two terms.[11]

In the Alexandrian tradition, *tolma* designates the "rebelliousness, audacity, or boldness" that causes either a movement away from God or an overstepping of the bounds of one's rank. Thus Philo Judaeus uses the variants of *tolma*-language to represent that insolent curiosity, which tempts one to know "the things above". Judeo-Christian writers of the Alexandrian world use *tolma* in the context of the "Scriptural sin of idolatry", or insolent curiosity about matters reserved for God alone. Like the Alexandrians, the Hermeticists use the discourse of *tolma* theologically, connecting audacity with a restless and insolent curiosity about divine matters. Similarly, this theme of a fall associated with the audacious desire to know the divine, reappears in the Gnostic tradition, especially Valentinian Gnosticism, where the fall of Aeon Sophia is caused by a desire to create, in imitation of God. Irenaeus identifies the passion or desire of Sophia to "search into the nature of the Father" as *tolma*. In the *Nag Hammadi* writings, *tolma* and *authades* (willfulness) appear as the spirit of mutiny caused by the involvement of Sophia or her offspring with lower levels of reality.[12]

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[7] Rist, 338; Torchia, 43.

[8] Torchia, 18, 31, note 30.

[9] Here Armstrong's interpretation is noteworthy. He points out that in this passage Plotinus is expressing the transitory "emotional intensification" of the mystic's sense of the "worthlessness" of all things before the Absolute Good, thus leading him to say for a moment that it would have been better if they had never existed. See Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 118.

[10] *Ennead V*, 26, note, 1. As Armstrong also points out – for neither Plotinus nor the Neopythagoreans, is the *dyad* multiplicity. It is rather the principle that makes multiplicity and number possible. See A.H. Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 242.

[11] Rist, 340, 343; Torchia, 43.

[12] Torchia, 18–24, 103; for original citations see Torchia, 32–5.

Owing perhaps to a difference in contexts, there is a fundamental difference between this Alexandrian, Hermeticist and Gnostic heritage – and Plotinus. While the former are warning against *hubris*, Plotinus is enhancing the mystical urge in us. In contradistinction with the former, who condemn the desire to be godlike, Plotinus exhorts us to be godlike and ascend to a vision of the One – "You must become first all godlike and all beautiful if you intend to see God and beauty" (I.6(1).9). Unlike the judgment of the former – that investigation of the divine is insolent – Plotinus deems the desire to search into the nature of the One to be anything but *tolmatic*. Even the discursive knowledge of the One – which Plato calls the "greatest study" in the *Republic* (505A2) to describe the "learning about it beforehand" (VI.7(38).36) – is an essential stage in the ascent to the One and a hallmark of aspiration. It is perhaps differences like these that support Armstrong's point that the connection between the *tolma* of the Gnostics and that of Plotinus is not at all close. In the system of Valentinus, the *tolma* of Aeon Sophia is almost the "exact opposite" of the *tolma* of Intellect in Plotinus: "It is a desire for that union with the first principle which in the system of Plotinus is the legitimate and necessary aspiration of all derived beings."[13] Thus, unlike the Alexandrians, Hermeticists, and the Gnostics, who associate *tolma* with a condemned curiosity about the divine, Plotinus deems *tolma* pejoratively for the *opposite* reason – because it thwarts aspiration and causes ignorance of the One (V.1(10).1). Like the Neopythagoreans, Plotinus associates *tolma* with a drive away from the One, towards otherness. *Tolma* is evil at levels below real beings, insofar as it detracts from the divine and incurs insatiate neediness through worldliness.

Finally, Plotinian *tolma* has not only a heritage, but also a possible legacy – in the work of Augustine. As Torchia discovers, there are significant conceptual links between Plotinus' *tolma* and Augustine's *superbia* (pride).[14] *Superbia* or willful self-exaltation initiates a "standing-apart-from-God" (*apostatare a Deo*). The desire for autonomy in the proud soul is reminiscent of the *tolmatic* drive towards autonomy. It seeks an autonomous existence, "living for itself" and "through itself" and turning to "inferior levels of reality", idolatrously choosing lesser goods as objects of desire. *Superbia* shifts the soul's attention from God to itself, leading to lusts – curiosity and carnal concupiscence – thus becoming the "root" or beginning of all sin, the chief expression of an "evil will", and the main motive for the soul's "aversion from God". Torchia points out that both *tolma* and *superbia* represent "root faults", and apostasy with respect to a higher ontological principle. *Tolma*

[13] As Armstrong notes, there is merely a "vague general resemblance between the outlines of the upper part of the Gnostic spiritual universe and of that of Plotinus". Armstrong, *Cambridge History*, 243–4.

[14] As Schürmann notes, Augustine translates *tolma* by *superbia*. For original citations see R. Schürmann, "The Philosophy of Plotinus. Doctor Reiner Schürmann's Course Lectures", inventory established by Pierre Adler (New York: The New School for Social Research, Department of Philosophy, 1994, photocopied), 49.

and *superbia* are also associated with the theme of idolatry. In Augustine this idolatry "coincides" with a refusal to exist under God. The idolatrous desire to be God-like is rooted in audacity (*audacia*), which is close to *tolma* in its connotations of "assertiveness, boldness and venturesomeness". In Plotinus the "idolatry" of *tolma* appears in soul's *tolmatic* desire for autonomy, its "imitative creation" by supervising an individual body and the distention of its powers. Like *tolma*, *superbia* inspires a drive towards autonomy and both are associated with the initiation of action, movement, temporal process, and the spirit of disquiet which opposes the contemplative mode of existence.[15]

Unlike *tolma*, which Plotinus uses directly or inferentially in more than a few tractates, *polupragmôn* in its different forms – *polupragmônos* and *polupragmônein* – appears only in III.7(45).11 and III.2(47).1 respectively, although Plotinus uses the notion of exteriorization in many parts of the *Enneads*. From III.2(47).1, we know that a *polupragmatic* nature, characterized by Schürmann as a "restless centrifugal principle", causes a "violent" self-exteriorization – "restless activity is unsafe for those who in it violently move themselves out of themselves". Notwithstanding the difference between a *polupragmatic* nature and *tolma* – the former connoting wrongful curiosity and *ennui* rather than the audacity of the latter – the two are related asymmetrically. While a *tolmatic* nature need not be *polupragmatic*, a *polupragmatic* nature expresses the willful exteriorization of *tolma*. As Schürmann points out, the principle of exteriorization bears different names in Plotinus – not just the curiosity characteristic of the *polupragmatic* nature, but also boldness (*tolma*), self-determination (*autexousion*), and "first otherness" (*prôtè heterotês*).[16]

Thus in III.7(45).11, *tolma* is present tacitly – through a *tolmatic* expression of soul's *polupragmatic* nature – for all levels of soul are, as a result, exteriorized into further discursion. This recalcitrant nature, which literally connotes being busy in a disproportionate sense, has been translated and understood by scholars as a type of inordinate engagement. Ficino renders it as *negotiari* and Deck as "involvement with many things".[17] Hans Jonas translates it as "a nature which was forward", and Beierwaltes as "busy". Schürmann understands it as "doing much" – "doing things that are foreign to it instead of doing the one thing that avails: being satisfied with beholding the One". He also understands it as "curious" because it connotes an eagerness to see what happens outside eternity.[18] It is this exteriorizing curiosity with respect to novelty that Trouillard describes as the act by which soul,

[15] Torchia, 139–49.

[16] Schürmann, 49.

[17] J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 23.

[18] Schürmann, 48–9. Schürmann, 48, finds a correspondence between Augustine's *curiositas* and being busy, which creates restlessness.

abandoning its search for the necessary being within itself, projects itself outwards towards "new things and new states".[19]

Torchia holds the literal meaning of *polupragmôn* to be "doing many things", or "being busy after many things at once", but in concrete terms to connote an "officious, meddlesome, or fastidious character" or an "over-excessive concern" with many details all at once. Tracing the history of *polupragmôn*, Torchia notes that this last meaning appears in the earliest uses of this term, wherein, it is an epithet for "annoying busybodies", or "troublesome gadflies". But, as he points out, *polupragmôn* also attains an epistemological significance, when it means a curiosity for all kinds of knowledge. Thus, in some works it means a positive curiosity with respect to historical, geographical or scientific information. However, in later works, it gains a wholly negative connotation, implying an aimless and scattered inquisitiveness in all things at once and thus mastery in none.[20] Finally, as Torchia notes, Plato endows the verb *polupragmôneo* with political connotations in the *Republic* (VI), where "... to do one's own business and not to be a busybody is Justice..." thus implying that injustice arises from wrongful intrusion of one group upon the interests or tasks of another. Coining a new term Torchia concludes that the "*polupragmatic*" tendency causes a state of conflict and imbalance that encourages an "overstepping of bounds". In Plotinus, Torchia considers *polupragmôn* to reach a higher metaphysical plane. Plotinus transforms Plato's civic virtues to contemplative ones, for true virtue lies in that which is conducive to contemplation and evil arises from that which hinders contemplation, as the "*polupragmatic*" tendency does.[21]

Tolma and Otherness of Intellect

Commentators like Armstrong and Torchia argue that in Plotinus' thought, *tolma* contributes the otherness so necessary to elicit the emanation of descending ranks from the One. Armstrong points out that all existence depends on "a kind of radical original sin" – as he describes the *tolmatic* wish for separation and independence – a desire directed away from the One that produces otherness. *Tolma* for Plotinus is the "necessary condition" for the occurrence of the "even, inevitable flow" of "eternal reality" from the One.[22] Within the realm of real being, an incipient otherness is displayed by Intellect and its "ontological interval" with respect to the

[19] J. Trouillard, "The Logic of Attribution in Plotinus", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1961): 130–131.

[20] For original citations see Torchia, 91, notes 14–16.

[21] See Torchia, 75–6. Although soul's *polupragmatic* nature thwarts contemplation, Torchia's association of this with evil may be hasty, for in III.7(45).11 soul operates at its noetic level – a level that precludes evil. See Chapter 12 of this book.

[22] Armstrong, *Cambridge History*, 242, 244.

One is essential if anything other than the One is to exist. Likewise Baladi points out that the vast ontological gulf between the One and its effects cannot be bridged by emanation alone. *Tolma*, a secondary principle is needed – to provide for the procession of being, plurality, and otherness. Similarly Torchia suggests that *tolma* provides a "pivotal" role in the emergence of Intellect from the One. *Tolma*, a "metaphysical principle in its own right", derived ultimately from the One, is yet treated as a separate element.[23]

Notwithstanding the willfulness implicit in its inherent voluntarism, *tolma*, in the view of these scholars, is anything but sovereign with respect to the One – for the One itself is responsible for *tolma*. In contrast to the Gnostics, who use guilt and wantonness to explain the world's evils, for Plotinus, self-will is, as Sinnige notes, ordered by divine decree.[24] Armstrong claims that Plotinus' reading of the Pythagoreans, may have led him to conclude that the "ultimate responsibility" for *tolma* must lie with the One itself – thus implying that *tolma* cannot be bad.[25] This echoes his point in an earlier work that if the One is to produce at all, it must produce something *other*, inferior to itself by being multiple – that is, it must produce Intellect and the *tolma* which causes its multiplicity.[26] Torchia reiterates this sentiment when he declares this as the basic problem – that the One is ultimately the source of otherness and thus the source of "inferior, limited being". In short, it is somehow paradoxically responsible for the surge towards multiplicity.

There is thus an ambiguity in the *Enneads*, regarding the generation of otherness "by and from the One" – an ambiguity especially visible in those passages, like III.8(30).8, where Intellect *chooses* otherness with respect to the One, a choice that Plotinus upbraids – an ambiguity that Torchia and Merlan formulate as a "tension" inherent in Plotinian emanation. This tension is manifested in the two disparate ways in which Plotinus accounts for plurality – the negative accounts in which generation is the result of an audacious act of *tolma* and the positive in which emanation is the result of the One's plenitude – summed up respectively as "the "falling away" from the One, implying voluntarism, and the "overflowing" of the One, implying the involuntary and necessary by Merlan[27] who considers Plotinian emanation to be an alliance between these pessimistic and optimistic accounts. In Torchia's words: "In order to generate at all, the One must produce something *other than itself*. However, that which is other than the One

[23] Torchia, 37, 46.

[24] Th.G. Sinnige, *Six Lectures on Plotinus and Gnosticism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 72–3.

[25] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 117.

[26] Armstrong, *Cambridge History*, 243.

[27] P. Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), 114.

must be inferior and limited in relation to its source".[28] Smith claims that "restlessness and self-assertion, sometimes termed *tolma*, represents one of the tensions in Plotinus' system" because this "critical" evaluation of procession as descent to the inferior is balanced, but not reconciled with the positive accounts of procession as arising from the generosity of the highest hypostases.[29] Armstrong narrows down this tension to the strain between passages of the *Enneads* that express two disparate desires, one leading to and the other away from the One: the unformed desire or overflow of "spontaneous creativity" of the One, which is directed back to the One whereupon it receives form and content, and the desire directed away from the One, which produces separation and otherness. Pointing out that Plotinus never explicitly harmonizes these two ways of thinking, Armstrong seeks to reconcile them, without being unfaithful to Plotinus' thought, by distinguishing, yet equating the two sides to the original unformed desire that is the basis of Intellect. One side is the desire for separate existence or the desire to *be* at all. However this is also the desire directed to the Good for it is only upon return to the One in "desiring contemplation" that Intellect can exist as what it is.[30]

In its basic nature, *tolma*, which inheres at all levels of generated beings, remains an irrational streak of audacity and tendency towards otherness. Yet, its role and effect change somewhat at levels below real beings. Thus Intellect's *tolma* – though "primary", on which, as Armstrong notes, lower expressions of *tolma* depend – may be different from these latter.[31] Nevertheless, it serves as an archetypal clue to these lower episodes. To understand the *tolma* of soul, noetic *tolma* must first be grasped. Plotinus depicts the *tolma* of Intellect – expressed as a volitional desire for an existence autonomous with respect to the One – directly or inferentially in *Enneads* V.1(10).7, VI.9(9).5, III.8(30).8, and V.8(31).13.[32]

1. There is One here also, but the One is the productive power of all things. The things, then, of which it is the productive power are those which Intellect observes, in a way cutting itself off from the power; otherwise it would not be Intellect. (V.1(10).7)

2. Here Plotinus uses the verb form of *tolma*: "its nearness after the One has kept it [Intellect] from dividing itself, though it did somehow dare to stand away from the One". (VI.9(9).5)

[28] Torchia, 40–41, 49, 106.

[29] A. Smith, "Eternity and time", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 210.

[30] Armstrong, *Cambridge History*, 242–3.

[31] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 118.

[32] As Torchia, 49, notes, although quotations 3 and 4 do not use "*tolma*-language" directly, the arrogance implicit in the motion away from the One, hints at a *tolmatic* spirit in these passages.

3. For when it contemplates the One, it does not contemplate it as one: otherwise it would not become Intellect. But beginning as one it did not stay as it began, but, without noticing it, became many, as if heavy [with drunken sleep], and unrolled itself because it wanted to possess everything. (III.8(30).8)

4. And on the other side he has established what begins with his son in the place after himself, so that he comes to be between the two, by the otherness of his severance from what is above, and by the bond which keeps him from what comes after him on the lower side. (V.8(31).13)[33]

In these passages Intellect seems to produce its own otherness with respect to the One, as is implied by the strong volition in will-laden terms like "cutting itself off", "dare to stand away", "unrolled itself", and "severance". In quotation 2 Intellect executes an *inexplicable*, audacious and apostate desire to sever from the One – it *somehow* dared to stand away from the One – and as Merlan notes in Torchia's citation, here an implication of voluntarism can be detected in both *tolma* and *apostanai*.[34]

The scholarship on Intellect's *tolma* is divided. Armstrong points out that the "original giving-out" or generation of the hypostases (Intellect and soul) are acts of *tolma* ("illegitimate self-assertion")[35] or negatively voluntary – thus highlighting, as Torchia notes, the "paradoxical character" of Intellect's detachment from the One in terms of a generation that is both determined and voluntary. The One's production of a desire to be other than itself is the basis of Intellect's *tolma*. Torchia notes that *tolma* is present in both phases of Intellect's formation from the One. *Tolma* is instrumental in the initial emergence of the *Dyad*, but also present in the second phase, in its contemplative vision of the One. *Tolma* remains necessary in maintaining this separation of the *Dyad*, once Intellect is fully delineated by the One. Thus, otherness originates in the One, yet Intellect is voluntarily other than the One.[36]

However, Rist countermands the direction of this line of reasoning. The Plotinian One, he points out, differs in many ways from the Monad of Neopythagoreanism. It is infinite in power and can therefore produce otherness that is less good, or in a non-moral sense, worse than its cause. For Plotinus, he adds, all otherness is in others with none in the One, for the One is quite unlike and unaffected by its products. Rist points out that the overflowing of the One that gives rise to plurality, is the effect of infinite power and exists eternally. The "range of products" from the One is infinite and includes what is not the One itself. The first product of the One is Intelligible Matter or the Indefinite *Dyad*, but it has

[33] Here, Intellect, symbolized by *Kronos* is in between the One (represented by *Ouranos*) and "Soul" (represented by *Zeus* and *Aphrodite*).

[34] Torchia, 47.

[35] Armstrong, *Cambridge History*, 242.

[36] Torchia, 42–5, 47, 49.

not sinned in coming into existence. It is produced, not because of its own free-will but because of "the nature of the One itself". Thus, Rist concludes, for Plotinus, it is not because of *tolma* that the many arise from the One, but rather due to the nature of the One which generates. This separation of *tolma* from the *Dyad* means that in Plotinus' view, sin is not necessarily present with plurality.

Reflecting on VI.9(9).5 (quotation 2), Rist contends that an exculpable Intellect dares to stand apart from the One only after it has already been generated through the generosity of the One and that it does so on grounds of expediency, not *tolma* – for the passage does not concern the generation of Intellect *per se*, or its "coming to stand apart" but rather its attitude once it has been generated or is actually "standing apart". That Intellect "dared" does not mean that it "recklessly broke away". Rather, it has "faced up" to "living apart after its generation — indeed it had no option".[37] Such a lack of option and Intellect's consequent *tolma*, is not a "guilty act" by Intellect that caused its own fall, but the "inevitable result" of the One's generosity.[38]

Such key terms like "no option" or "inevitable result" signify necessity and point to a crucial non-*tolmatic* cause of Intellect's voluntary quest for its interval with respect to the One – that of expediency. Intellect seeks a descent from the One on the expedient ground that it cannot bear the full power from the One (VI.7(38).15). Expediency entails both voluntarism and necessity, but no audacity. Thus Rist can conclude that Intellect "*must* stand apart from the One, but it does not *will* to be separate". However Rist ties *tolma* itself with expediency – he holds that Intellect's *tolma* is "not a guilty will for separation but a 'facing up' to necessity". Devoid as it is of audacity, the will to expediency, though voluntary, is not *tolmatic* – it is a sign of acumen, concomitant with the emanative architecture that Plotinus requires. Conversely, although necessary, *tolma* is not limited by the measure inherent in expediency. In fact, its audacity can contradict expediency – it can cause otherness to exceed limits imposed by expediency. While expediency doles out otherness according to strict needs, *tolma* wrings it out in excess, in accordance with counter-*epistrophic* desires. Thus although *tolma* is necessary –

[37] While agreeing with Rist's contention that Intellect has "no option" but to remain apart from the One, Torchia, 50–52, disagrees on two grounds. First, he holds that Rist bypasses the tension between the optimistic and pessimistic attitudes towards otherness in the *Enneads* as a whole. Taken in isolation, Rist's remarks might lead one to believe that there is no such tension. Second, contrary to Rist, Torchia holds that it is irrelevant whether the passage refers to *nous*' "coming to stand apart", or its "actual standing apart", once it has been generated by the One. While Rist opts for the latter alone, Torchia argues that in both cases, *nous* must show a "desire or *tolma*" to be other than the One. *Nous*' *tolma* plays a double role. It starts *nous*' "standing apart" or audacious drive towards otherness. However, *tolma* is needed by *nous* even after it emerges, for it requires an act of *tolma* to sustain *nous* as a distinct hypostasis. In the absence of *tolma*, *nous* and everything else would be subsumed by the One.

[38] Rist, 339, 340–343.

especially among real beings in the context of emanation – it is not expedient. Conversely, expediency is not *tolmatic*, for it is not audacious. Contrary to Rist's interpretation, here *tolmatic* motions are considered separate and somewhat redundant to the cause of both otherness and expediency.[39]

Contrary also to Torchia's contention – that *tolma* initially appears in the first phase when Intellect emerges in obscurity as a pre-intellectual entity and is then maintained in the second – here *tolma* is understood to appear only after the second phase, when Intellect has already returned in contemplation to the One to derive its form as Intellect. In order to receive this power of the One, Intellect must first, on grounds of expediency and not *tolma*, descend from one to a state of multiplicity, thus reinforcing the explicit otherness carved out already in the first phase. There are thus two moments of pre-*tolmatic* otherness of Intellect with respect to the One – the first non-voluntary otherness flowing from the One and the second carved out voluntarily by the pre-intellectual entity. Neither is *tolmatic* and in fact, both are anterior to Intellect's added *tolmatic* descent from the One.

The otherness in these two phases perhaps reflects a still prior wedge of otherness – that between the two activities of the One. At levels below the One, multiplicity and otherness begin with an anterior, primal, non-voluntary otherness that appears by necessity within the progenitor. This is the otherness between its two activities. While the first reflects the substance of the progenitor, its second activity, produced with necessity from the primary as its image, emanates outward with necessity – it "must in everything be a consequence of it, different from the thing itself" (V.4(7).2). Insofar as it is this second, lesser activity, which makes and constitutes the progeny, this latter is substantially lower and hence *other* than the progenitor. Thus the wedge between the two activities is reflected in the wedge between progenitor and progeny. At levels below the One, this interval between image (second activity) and original (first activity) constitutes a primal otherness that devolves upon the progeny as the voluntary otherness the latter seeks so as to accommodate with expediency the inherent otherness it receives from its progenitor – the seminal otherness that defines it. Where the offspring of Intellect are concerned – even if *tolma* had not appeared – there would remain this intrinsic, exculpable otherness, appearing with necessity between the two activities of Intellect. This devolves upon its progeny (soul) in the form of the latter's voluntary quest for otherness on grounds of expediency. *Tolma* now seems an added, almost redundant source of otherness – and the only one with the potential for culpability.

The generation of Intellect from the One is more complex, for the One admits of no otherness.[40] Were it to stir through its generative activity, the One would

[39] *Ibid*., 341–2.

[40] There is no distinction within the One between what it is and that it is, or between its essence and existence (VI.8(39).12). By contrast, in all other things, this distinction has to be made. See L.P. Gerson, "Plotinus's Metaphysics: Emanation or Creation?" *Review of Metaphysics* 46 (March 1993): 571.

garner otherness, but as Plotinus tells us in V.1(10).6, the One does not move, for there is no end for it to move to. Remaining continually turned to itself it generates in the silence of perfect continence. This fecund silence is not the barren stillness that Plotinus rejects in IV.8(6).6 – "not a single real being would have existed if that one had stayed still in itself". The foreshadowing of otherness latent in the integral One is perhaps a primal intimation of the rungs of otherness to emerge. In the same passage, Plotinus speculates that if the One had not generated and had remained alone, "all things would have been hidden, shapeless within that one". This latent otherness among the potentially discrete, hidden, shapeless things perhaps manifests itself later as the otherness inherent in the limited multiplicity of the noetic world. It begins with a wedge between the One's activities. Notwithstanding the absence of otherness in the One, in V.4(7).2 there already *is* a seminal wedge distinguishing the One's two activities, as evinced by Plotinus' use of "coexistent". While the "Principle" (the One) abides, "the activity generated from the perfection in it and its coexistent activity acquires substantial existence". This wedge devolves upon the first of the two phases that Torchia refers to – the phase of out-flow of the second activity from the One to generate the pre-intellectual unformed entity.

This seminal wedge between the One's two activities is born, not out of *tolmatic* desire, but out of the emanative architecture of the One's overflow and its concomitant requirements of expedience. Armstrong identifies the desire for separate existence characteristic of the Indefinite *Dyad* as the desire to *be* at all, which in turn entails the *epistrophic* return to the One.[41] Yet, while this desire to *be* entails otherness, this need not be *tolmatic*, for *tolma*, an apostate gesture, calls for more – it calls for a misguided and culpable *rejection* of the prior. That this seminal otherness is non-*tolmatic* is proved by the prevalence of necessity and absence of volition. The second activity is produced by the primary with *necessity* and it emanates outwards also with necessity (V.1(10).6, V.4(7).2). It is also proved by the silence attendant upon the One's production of Intellect – a silence that demonstrates the sheer absence of any *tolmatic* exteriorization.

The seminal wedge between the integral One's first activity and its iconic "co-existent" second activity devolves upon the distinct otherness in each of the two phases of Intellect's formation from the One. In V.2(11).1 the overflow of activity or "superabundance" of the One makes, as its amorphous image, "something other than itself" and this wedge of otherness is non-*dyadic* or non-*tolmatic*, but *expedient*, for it devolves further upon pre-Intellect and facilitates the duality required for the latter's first contemplation of the One. So far, there is no voluntarism. Voluntarism appears in the second phase, when the pre-Intellect reinforces the otherness it inherits in the first phase, through its expedient volition towards a descent from the One to the many – without which it cannot hold the full power (to generate) it receives from the One in contemplation. It chooses to break

[41] Armstrong, *Cambridge History*, 243.

up this power, on grounds of expediency, thereby gaining a non-*tolmatic*, and for the first time, *volitional* otherness, thus descending from unity to one-many: "But from the Good himself who is one there were many for this Intellect; for it was unable to hold the power which it received and broke it up and made the one power many, that it might be able so to bear it part by part" (VI.7(38).15). Intellect's *tolma* only adds further to these forms of prior otherness.

Such a criterion of expediency may be at work even in quotation 3 (III.8(30).8). Intellect's desire to possess everything, which is the direct cause of its distention and further descent from unity to multiplicity, evokes dismay in Plotinus – "How much better it would have been for it not to want this, for it became the second!" Intellect *begins* as one, but unravels into multiplicity and a seemingly culpable distention. Thus Intellect's will towards otherness is viewed by Torchia as a "blameworthy act" – this passage is indicative of a "slothfulness and moral laxity" on the part of Intellect.[42] Yet, here too, there are perhaps tones of an exculpable expediency, so that the extent of the influence of *tolma* on Intellect's voluntarism remains arguable. That Intellect contemplates the One, not as one, has to do more with Intellect's incapacity to bear the raw fullness of the One (as in VI.7(38).15) than invidious and audacious ambition. Intellect has an instrumental need – in order to be Intellect, it cannot contemplate the One as one – it must fall from unity. This flavor of expediency is underscored by Plotinus' use of "otherwise" – "otherwise it would not become Intellect" – and by the fact that Intellect does not notice its initial transition from unity to multiplicity – "without noticing it, became many" – implying perhaps that it did not culpably intend this descent. Thus Armstrong notes that the language here suggests more a sort of "drunken absent-mindedness" than "audacious rebellion".[43] Unlike the individual souls of V.1(10).1, ignorant of their noble origin directly as a result of their willful and audacious revelry, Intellect's not noticing its descent may indicate – not *tolma* – but its own inherent limitations. Being unable to hold the full power from the One, it cannot know the state from which it falls – it is unaware of its beginning as one and transition to the many. Intellect's desire to possess everything perhaps adds to this initial otherness and "unrolls" it further. In fact, it remains doubtful if even this desire to possess everything is *tolmatic* for this stems from an integrative urge that accomplishes the noetic unity inherent in Intellect's one-many. It does not stem from a disdain for the One or longing for that which is inferior to Intellect.[44] Thus Rist regards Intellect's urge to possess everything to be necessary rather than voluntary: "Once produced, it has no option but to will to possess all. As generated

[42] Torchia, 48.

[43] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 118.

[44] Torchia, 48–9, holds the contrary view that *nous*' desire to possess all things is wrong because it facilitates the emergence of the manifold.

Being, that is the best it can will. Hence there is no deliberate choice of falling away."[45]

Intellect's *tolma* may not be serving the cause of first otherness even in quotation 2 (VI.9(9).5). Armstrong and Torchia suggest that *tolma* countermands the *epistrophic* inclination of all generated beings. Armstrong maintains that the "contemplative return" of the "unformed life", which thereby becomes the one-many of Intellect, must be eternally checked if anything other than the Good is to exist at all. Intellect cannot disappear back into primal unity if the Good is to "diffuse himself as he must". Armstrong identifies as the "primary" *tolma* this "checked return", eternal "standing away", or "separation which leaves Intellect as near the One as is compatible with separate existence".[46] Torchia echoes Armstrong when he asserts that in the absence of *tolma* Intellect would follow the "natural inclination of all things to return to the One" and concludes: "In the absence of such an 'aloofness', nothing other than the One could exist."[47]

Yet this line of reasoning may not apply to quotation 2, for Intellect must be sustained with respect to two opposite extremes – the extreme of its dividing itself further and the extreme of its re-absorption into the One – of which quotation 2 refers only to the first, and Torchia only to the second. In quotation 2, its nearness after the One has *kept* Intellect from "dividing further", or tethered its multiplicity to the limit of the "one-multiple", preventing it from regressing to infinity or the "innumerable" or "altogether" multiplicity that Plotinus refers to in VI.6(34).1, 3. If the primal otherness between the One and Intellect emanates from the nature of the One, as Rist contends, then its blessed propinquity to the One should contain Intellect – not from its re-absorption in the One – but from its inordinate unraveling of itself, thus reining in its further multiplicity. It dares to stand apart from the One perhaps in revolt against this reining in. Alternatively, its daring to stand apart is perhaps a remnant of that which the One is seeking to check – Intellect's hapless *tolmatic* division of itself in excess of what is necessary on grounds of expediency. Without this blessed proximity, Intellect might unroll too far to be Intellect. The One confers upon Intellect the degree of unity it needs to be Intellect.

An additional concern is the moral status of *tolma*. In Plotinus' thought *tolma* can range from the benign will to exteriorization causing ontological loss among real beings, to the bad audacity associated with the beginning of evil in V.1(10).1. In his late work I.8(51) Plotinus defines a privative and primal evil – as "absolute deficiency" with respect the good (Chapter 5). It is "always undefined, nowhere stable, subject to every sort of influence, insatiate, complete poverty" (Chapter 3) and a shadow compared with real being. In its *absolute* dearth of the good, anterior even to matter, evil is a "sort of form of non-existence", pertaining to things that

[45] Rist, 342.
[46] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 116–7.
[47] Torchia, 51–2.

share in non-being – not absolute non-being but only something "other than being", not non-being in terms of that which is logically distinct from being (movement, rest) but "like an image of being or something still more non-existent" (Chapter 3). Thus as Rist notes, at one end is the One, which overflows and is good. At the other end is an impotent evil that causes, not good, but privation of good. The Good and evil are opposing *archai* or extremes, but evil has no active power of promoting itself.[48]

The "falling short of good" that Plotinus defines as evil (III.2(47).5) is an absolute deficiency – to be discerned from any limited dearth of good in that which can be perfect at the level of its own nature (I.8(51).5). In VI.6(34).1 Plotinus addresses this difference. On the one hand there is multiplicity, or a "falling away from the One" through exteriorization. On the other, there is infinity, or the "total falling away" characteristic of its "innumerable multiplicity". Multiplicity breaks the silence of self-containment and entails a "foolish or compulsory" journey to the exterior. Plotinus claims: "A thing is multiple when, unable to tend to itself, it pours out and is extended in scattering." That which can stem this extrusion, or abide in its outpouring, becomes magnitude.

This has implications for the moral stature of *tolma*. Although a will towards otherness, noetic *tolma* cannot tend as far as infinity, for a will towards infinity would make Intellect evil and evil is precluded from real beings. Thus implicit in noetic *tolma* is a limit. One manifestation of this limit is Intellect's self-containment when it produces, which renders it a magnitude. *Tolma* among real beings is limited by their very reality and propinquity to the One. As Plotinus tells us in VI.6(34).2, in the intelligible, number is limited like real beings. Number is not infinite but limited to "as many as the real beings". Thus multiplicity "there" among real beings is not evil, for it is unified, limited to "one-multiple", and not allowed to be infinite or "altogether multiplicity" (VI.6(34).3). Only infinity – characterized by unlimited and exteriorized self-dissipation and the consequent "total" falling away from the One – is evil. Such infinity, untethered by limit, exists "perhaps" in time and the things which "come to be" – but not among real beings, where it is limited (VI.6(34).3). This is consonant with I.8(51).3 where Plotinus is clear that evil does not exist among real beings. Evil can pertain only to that which shares in ontological nullity: "Evil cannot be included in what really exists or in what is beyond existence; for these are good. So it remains that if evil exists, it must be among non-existent things, as a sort of form of non-existence, and pertain to one of the things that are mingled with non-being or somehow share in non-being".

Thus *tolma* among real beings cannot be evil. At worst, it decimates being in excess of that required by expediency. *Tolma* can be evil and pernicious only below real beings, as in the case of the worldly individual souls in V.1(10).1. To

[48] J.M. Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil", *Phronesis* 6 (1961): 159.

use Rist's concluding words – *tolma* in its bad sense is not equivalent to plurality *per se*, but plurality only "in proportion as it loses sight of unity".[49]

Conclusion

An unavoidable conclusion in this chapter is that *tolma* may not be the root of all multiplicity (Armstrong) and Intellect may not have come into being as a result of its *tolma* (Merlan).[50] *Tolmatic* otherness is preceded by moments of silent non-*tolmatic* wedges between the One and Intellect – a silence unperturbed by audacious exteriorization, for the One abides in itself as it overflows. Volition expressed through will (*boulêsis*) need not be *tolmatic*, contrary to Torchia's contention that at levels other than the One, will expresses itself as *tolma*, a blameworthy desire for otherness.[51] That otherness can exist for Plotinus without the aid of *tolma* and that even volitional otherness need not be *tolmatic*, indicate that it is not *tolma*, but *otherness* that is a corner stone of Plotinian emanation – for *tolma* appears on the scene when otherness is already in place. Thus noetic *tolma* remains, in the ultimate, redundant to emanation. Moreover, it is not even culpable, for volition is nestled within a necessity decreed by the One. For real beings, even *tolma*, the will to apostasy, is not itself apostate but necessary and decreed, for "necessity contains the free-will" (IV.8(6).5). Culpability is meaningless in the absence of evil. Like evil, culpability too is absent among real beings.

Yet, it is unlikely that a serious thinker like Plotinus would infuse *tolma* into his metaphysics for idle reasons. Neither a specter, nor a jester, *tolma* perhaps serves merely as the exculpable metaphysical root and harbinger of disarray and audacity that does no harm to real beings – besides distending otherness beyond that required by expediency – but grows evil and culpable only in the embodied state, when the *epistrophic* urge is weakened and the worldliness of the world ensnares *tolmatic* attention.

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[49] Rist, "Monism", 343.

[50] Merlan, 114.

[51] Voluntarism and "will" (*boulêsis*) are not used in a literal personified manner, for as Rist, 342, notes, Intelligible Matter, the firstborn of the One, has no will. Neither do the noetic levels of soul or the matter of the sense-world. Thus any will at work here is, so to speak, an emanative will – at once voluntary and determined. As Torchia notes, Plotinus "inserts" will into emanation itself, thus providing an "interesting metaphysical innovation". The One's "will-to-be" is self-directed. But at lower hypostatic levels, "will" can only be directed at something other than the One. See Torchia, 98–101.

Chapter 12

Tolma, *Polupragmatic* Nature, Unquiet Power, and the Descent of Soul in III.7(45).11

In Armstrong's words, all "lower audacities" depend on and must to a degree be judged in relation to the "primary" *tolma* of Intellect.[1] The dependence in question is through a refractive mimesis. *Tolma* continues below Intellect, all the way to the matter of the sense-world, impacting layers of the edifice of soul and propelling souls in their descent. This is mimesis rather than a reverberation of noetic *tolma per se*. These lower episodes are not automated nether echoes of Intellect's *tolma*, for *tolma* entails voluntarism. Each level of *tolma* must be "willed" at that level. These separate eruptions of volition, desires for autonomy and disarrays in contemplation are threaded together by mimesis in a vertical flow of *tolma*. The *tolma* of Intellect is copied voluntarily – albeit distortedly – not only at the level of the hypostasis soul but also its species souls.[2] As Blumenthal notes, the World Soul as well as individual souls "wish to be their own masters".[3] At each level, *tolma* entails a detrimental self-extrusion and patently futile otherness that lead to false autonomy and the world of images. *Tolma* afflicts also the matter of the sense-world (III.6(26).14), the human intellect when it directs itself towards matter (I.8(51).9) and the part of the lower soul that is in vegetal life (V.2(11).1). Finally, *tolmatic* expressions are also implicit when souls descend through narcissistic self-love (V.1(10).1, IV.4(28).3, IV.3(27).12). The basic nature of *tolma* remains somewhat similar, notwithstanding significant differences, such as the absence in Intellect of the *polupragmatic* or restless principle that plagues soul. Other differences appear at levels below real beings. *Tolma* may no longer be redundant,

[1] A.H. Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", in *Gnosis, Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978), 118.

[2] Torchia suggests that the *tolmatic* will underlying the emergence of Intellect is "subsequently manifested" at the level of soul – thus implying that it is the same will now appearing at the psychic level. See N.J. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Being* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 41. However, this denies the voluntarism inherent in *tolma*. Instead, the level of soul should willfully copy noetic *tolma*.

[3] H.J. Blumenthal, "Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul in Plotinus", in *Soul and Intellect: Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 61.

for it seems to trigger the appearance of the realm of becoming through soul's *polupragmatic* nature. Moreover, in the embodied state, *tolma* can be even evil and culpable.

Armstrong asserts that in III.7(45).11 the cosmic or World Soul does not descend "altogether" in its generation of the temporal world. It continues, as elsewhere in the *Enneads*, to preside over the world of becoming it generates, in noetic quietude. Armstrong adds further that individual souls have not "really fallen" either. Their intelligible, or "authentic, highest part" remains in eternity. All that descends is a part or power of the cosmic soul – its "dianoetic" power or *logos*, which descends to the discursive level and generates the temporal world. Armstrong concludes that Plotinus' use of *tolma* in III.7(45).11 indicates nothing very dreadful – "no sort of cosmic disaster". There is in this treatise "no concealed Gnostic mythical drama, no real fall of soul and consequent cosmic tragedy".[4] Deck also asserts that soul cannot actually descend, rooted as it is in the world of true being. The descent of soul is a metaphor, which can be balanced by another metaphor – matter's surge to grasp being and intelligibility.[5] Likewise, Callahan contends that Plotinus often insists that not all soul descends to production. A part of it – the higher soul – remains in contemplation of Intellect. Otherwise soul would be cut off from the source of its power and its productive activity would end.[6]

Although soul does not descend in its entirety, there is a *tolmatic* self-extrusion afflicting all levels of soul, in III.7(45).11. What is the character of this descent and do soul's *tolma* and *polupragmatic* nature entail ontological loss or evil? To explore these questions, four central passages from III.7(45).11 – on the *polupragmatic* soul, its disquiet, the weakening extension of the World Soul and the discursion of the "we"[7] – and other relevant passages are examined in this

[4] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 120–121.

[5] J.N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 114.

[6] J.F. Callahan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1948), 130.

[7] Armstrong does not apply these passages to the different levels of soul. He applies them all to a "power" or "part" of cosmic soul, even though he distinguishes between this latter and the hypostasis soul. Thus, the *polupragmatic*, or "fussy independent" nature, its desire for autonomy and its wanting "more", which he ties to its choice for having its mental objects in succession and not all at once – all apply to this "part" or "power" of Cosmic Soul. See Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 120. Here however, the 4 passages are distributed to the three levels of soul. The *polupragmatic* nature and unquiet power of soul are ascribed mainly to the hypostasis soul. Unlike Armstrong, Manchester suggests that only hypostasis soul "figures in the *constitution* of Time" in III.7(45).11 – not as a whole, but only 'parts' ("Busy Nature and Restless Power"). See P. Manchester, "Time and the Soul in Plotinus, III 7 [45], 11", *Dionysius* 2 (1978): 120. Contrary to Manchester's interpretation, the "we" which lengthens its journey and constructs time is taken to be the

chapter in three sections: (1) *Polupragmatic* Nature and Unquiet Power of Hypostasis Soul, (2) *Polupragmatic* Nature of World Soul, and (3) *Polupragmatic* Nature and *Tolma* of Individual Souls.

Polupragmatic Nature and Unquiet Power of Hypostasis Soul

Armstrong claims that like the original "giving-out" of the "indefinite dyad" from the One, which is the basis of Intellect, the "giving-out" of "Soul" from Intellect is an act of "illegitimate self-assertion" or *tolma*.[8] Yet, the same reservations regarding Intellect – that *tolma* may not be the cause of *first* otherness – apply also to soul. The prime cause of the otherness between Intellect and the hypostasis soul is perhaps the otherness between the two activities of Intellect which facilitates the generous overflow of activity from Intellect. This otherness then devolves upon soul's first non-*tolmatic* otherness with respect to Intellect, manifested in the difference in multiplicity between the one-and-many of soul and the "one-many" of Intellect. The former exceeds the noetic otherness of the latter, thus demarcating and ranking the hypostasis soul below Intellect. Thus in V.2(11).1, there is already a non-*tolmatic* wedge between the two activities of Intellect, with the hypostasis soul being the second activity, or "multiple power" poured forth by Intellect, mimetic with respect to it and "springing forth" from its first activity or substance. The hypostasis soul then does not need *tolma* to carve out its primary otherness with respect to Intellect. Its separateness from Intellect is decreed by an exculpable and expedient emanative necessity. In III.7(45).11, even the desire of soul's unquiet power to transfer what it sees in the noetic realm is perhaps more a case of mimetic expedience than *tolma*, for soul is copying Intellect and accommodating its limited powers.

What remains now is the only form of *tolma* that is not redundant – soul's *polupragmatic* nature and its consequent volition towards autonomy from Intellect. This does not induce discursion as such, for soul has already launched into its higher discursion, manifested in the disquiet of its power. All this does is perhaps exacerbate the otherness soul already possesses and distend its discursion further, prompting the motion of soul crucial to the stirring of time from its fore-life. Thus

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species levels of individual souls. That which extends itself to a weaker extension is the World Soul. This is more akin to the interpretation of Strange, for whom, Plotinus speaks of the hypostasis soul as the generator of time, "unquiet power" applies to "soul in the intelligible world", and "we" to the "individual rational soul", which is identified with the hypostasis soul because of Plotinus' doctrine of the unity of soul. See S. K. Strange, "Plotinus on the Nature of Eternity and Time", in *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*, L.P. Schrenk (ed.) (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 48–50.

[8] A.H. Armstrong, *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 242.

otherness adopts a different hue when it comes to the realm of process. For the first time, at this moribund stage of the sequence of otherness punctuating the efflux from the One, the *first* otherness between its final progeny (time and the world of sense) and their progenitor (soul), is prompted by soul's *tolmatic polupragmatic* nature. Unlike the expedient otherness demarcating echelons of real beings, this episode is not overtly expedient. Soul's *polupragmatic* nature cannot beget the realm of becoming. If anything, it is inherently barren, for it hinders contemplation and saps fecundity.[9] As was argued in Chapters 9 and 10, what begets is neither *tolma*, nor the motion of soul, but the fecundity of the *logoi* borne by soul. Perhaps soul's *polupragmatic* nature does no more than direct and exacerbate the down-flow of soul's second activity – not "to itself or in itself" – but out of itself where it lies in "making and production" (III.7(45).12), thus propelling its fecund *logoi* into the generative act. It is perhaps in this sense alone that soul's restlessness facilitates the appearance of time and the world of sense.

In III.7(45).11, notwithstanding its incipient contemplation of Intellect, the hypostasis soul is, to begin with, already in a state of discursion and imbalance. It is already cleaved into the one-and-many – manifested in its low metaphysical position in the hierarchy of the hypostases. Into this scene appears – not *tolma*[10] – but soul's *polupragmatic* nature:

> 1. But since there was a restlessly active nature which wanted to control itself and be on its own, and chose to seek for more than its present state, this moved, and time moved with it. (III.7(45).11)

Until now, despite its discursion and imbalance, soul is at its noetic level,[11] for as Strange notes, this "officious" nature exists in the intelligible world,[12] and as Schürmann points out, this principle of restlessness pertains to the restful seed of time in the soul still in Intellect, causing soul to break through Intellect's repose.[13] This eternal *polupragmatic* or "restlessly active" nature (*phuseôs polupragmônos*), also alluded to in III.4(15).1 as soul's self-extrusive progenitive motion, is expressed in a movement that is an affront to the aspiratory circumambulation of soul around the One (IV.4(28).16). It is *tolmatic* insofar as it prompts soul to

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[9] Torchia, 76.

[10] Smith uses *tolma* directly in reference to this passage. See A. Smith, "Eternity and time", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 210.

[11] Contrary to the interpretation of Torchia, 72, that the first manifestation of soul's *tolma* occurs at the level of the World Soul, here *polupragmatic* nature is ascribed mainly to the hypostasis soul. See note 7.

[12] Strange, 48.

[13] R. Schürmann, "The Philosophy of Plotinus. Doctor Reiner Schürmann's Course Lectures", inventory established by Pierre Adler (New York: The New School for Social Research, Department of Philosophy, 1994, photocopied), 49.

swerve away from priors towards novelty, on account of its "venturesomeness" or "indiscreet curiosity".[14] Through the desires it unleashes – to "control itself", "be on its own", and "seek for more than its present state" – it descends and launches into a second lower discursive motion that prompts the appearance of time – "this moved, and time moved with it". This willful descent of soul in quotation 1 is reminiscent of a much earlier work, V.1(10).5, where Plotinus points to soul's *tolmatic* capacity for desertion – "soul exists among the intelligible realities in close unity with them, unless it wills to desert them". As in quotation 1, soul's potential for apostasy here is tied, not to its birth, but its possible descent from its own prior noetic level. Soul is already in existence as the one-and-many, in close unity with intelligible realities and will continue in its higher discursion "unless" its *tolmatic* desertion intervenes and causes it to descend. Thus soul's desertion of priors has the potential to merely exacerbate the pre-*tolmatic* seminal otherness that already defines it, quite as much as Intellect's *tolmatic* desire aggravated its otherness with respect to the One.[15] *Tolma*, in this quotation from V.1(10).5, does not serve any generative purpose. However, in III.7(45).11 soul's *tolmatic* restlessness pertains to generation and it is anything but redundant. Its *polupragmatic* nature serves to stir soul to a motion crucial for catapulting time from its fore-life. This motion attains two things at once – it projects time as also extrudes soul out of its essence towards that which is ever new.

Soul's *polupragmatic* nature does not introduce desire as such into Plotinus' metaphysics, for desire precedes even Intellect. The first, pre-intellectual entity that emerges from the One is an amorphous "desire and unformed sight" (V.3(49).11). In III.7(45).11 what this *polupragmatic* nature introduces are specific *tolmatic* desires at the level of soul – desires that express a near fatal *ennui* with respect to contemplation. First, there is soul's bi-faceted desire for autonomy from Intellect – soul wanted to "control itself" and "be on its own". The first is delusive in its very wording, for it sounds as if soul wanted to switch from being controlled by Intellect to controlling itself. Yet, Intellect never did "control" soul in a negative sense – it sustained and formed soul and soul depended on Intellect through contemplation. Soul's wanting to "be on its own" is an explicit desire for the cessation of this contemplation, for that is the only way it can be "on its own". This too is futile and delusive, for soul can never literally "be on its own". To exist at all, it must be sustained by Intellect. This pair of desires has implications for a subtler disharmony between the two activities of soul, the first of which keeps it

[14] Torchia, 78.

[15] Torchia, 71–2, points to V.1(10).5, where soul would remain with the divine except for its "intentional apostasy". He notes that this and other similar passages call to mind *nous*' "standing apart" from the One (VI.9(9).5). Torchia concludes that *nous* and soul are both "guilty" of "estranging themselves" from "higher principles of unity". The interpretation here is different – soul's apostasy is *not* taken as cause of *first* otherness. Moreover, neither soul, nor Intellect can be "guilty", for there is no evil among real beings.

moored to Intellect. To fulfill these desires, soul would have to sever its first activity from Intellect, so that it could "be on its own" and "control itself". Yet, this is futile, for soul would not be soul if it indeed severed its first activity from Intellect. Thus, contrary to Torchia's suggestion – that soul's *tolma* prompts a "severance" from the noetic level[16] – and Trouillard's – that in giving birth to time, soul "abandons" its search for the "necessary being it has within itself"[17] – soul cannot be detaching itself altogether from Intellect. Perhaps all that happens is soul's pre-cosmic contemplation of Intellect is thwarted to a degree, or as Torchia suggests: "Soul's commitment to the contemplative life of eternity weakens".[18] Insofar as soul remains thus moored to Intellect, this pair of *polupragmatic* desires perhaps merely increases the wedge of expedient otherness already in place between soul's two activities. Like the One and Intellect, which, out of plenitude, poured forth their activities to generate, soul's second activity should spring forth out of a mimetic plenitude – not *tolma*. But unlike the former, soul loses quietude and extrudes out of itself as it pours out its activity. Even this need not be *tolmatic*, for soul's self-extrusion in V.2(11).1 and III.4(15).1 are not audacious. In springing forth, soul's second activity should carve out its non-*tolmatic* otherness with respect to its first activity. Its *polupragmatic* desires should exacerbate this anterior, benign otherness. This disarray should reverberate and be copied down the rungs of soul.

Soul's desire for novelty, equally futile, expresses its ambition and choice – it *chose* to "seek for more than its present state". The "present state" which soul seeks to surmount is its contemplation of Intellect. *Tolma* or *polupragmatic* audacity means turning away from contemplation of Intellect. It is audacious to thus turn away from a blessed state, not only because contemplation is thereby thwarted, but also because a self-extrusive soul now turns "not directed to itself or in itself", but towards the realm of becoming, where it "lies in making and production" (III.7(45).12). Torchia ties this choice for more with the desire for autonomy, for the latter presupposes soul's dissatisfaction with "what it already possesses", thus prompting it to seek for "more".[19] This ambitious choice too is delusive, for "more" lies in the direction of the One. For soul to gain more than its "present state" of contemplation of Intellect, it should return to Intellect – but not the way Plotinus hypothesizes in III.7(45).12 – "If ... this part of the soul turned back to the intelligible world and to eternity, and rested quietly there, what would there still be except eternity?" As a cosmic process, such a return is infeasible for the procession cannot in fact be reversed. As a hypostasis, soul can never actually return to Intellect, for the metaphysical structure of the hypostases is fixed. But the

[16] *Ibid*., 71.

[17] J. Trouillard, "The Logic of Attribution in Plotinus", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1961): 130.

[18] Torchia, 77.

[19] *Ibid*.

individual self *qua* soul can attempt this ascent. What it can do is replace its ambitious *tolmatic* choice "for more" by the anti-*tolmatic, epistrophic* aspiration to seek for more than its present state, causing it to revert to its own noetic level and repose in Intellect. Instead – in its *tolmatic* effrontery – soul's choice for "more" is a choice towards a descent from the One. It executes this choice by its *polupragmatic* motion propaedeutic to the birth of time – a violent self-extrusion characteristic of restless activity (III.2(47).1) that swerves it away from Intellect towards novelty. This motion or act by which time arises, depicted by Trouillard as an "*ecstasy* in the etymological sense of the word" is really counter-*epistrophic* and thus fundamentally anti-ecstatic, in the self transcending, theological sense of "ecstasy".[20] In extruding downwards *out* of itself, soul is, so to speak, sinking more *into* itself.

Schürmann points to the irrational origin of time and the ontological loss that results from soul's *polupragmatic* nature: "Time is of irrational origin, a product of a restless, centrifugal principle, whose audacity results in an ontological loss".[21] Trouillard depicts this loss in terms of a distortion. The world of sense expresses the intelligible world, but in the mode of a "deforming refraction". There is so great a "loss of being" in the passage from the "constituent to the constituted" that some essential characters can be "perverted".[22] Yet if the impact of this centrifugal principle is calibrated carefully, the result is perhaps more nuanced than an outright ontological loss, for although there is a *tolmatic* departure from the higher world, there is also an unbroken tie to this world, through mimesis. Through these desires, the hypostasis soul gains layers of multiplicity, of which there are three sources – its restlessness, desire for autonomy from priors, and ambition to seek for more than its present state. The first lot of multiplicity, garnered in the disruption of soul's contemplation of Intellect, is caused by the very advent of its restless nature. A second lot is garnered and soul's *tolma* grows more palpable when its *polupragmatic* nature concretizes into futile desires for autonomy – to "control" itself and "be on its own". Desire as such enhances multiplicity and given that these desires encourage autonomy from Intellect, soul's multiplicity is enhanced even further. Finally, a third lot of multiplicity is garnered and *tolma* perhaps peaks when soul's desire hardens to its inauspicious choice to seek "for more" than its present state. Having run the entire gamut of growing immanence, by regressing from restlessness to desire, soul enhances its multiplicity further, for it now has a palpable *choice* and chooses with a twofold apostasy. First, soul is apostate in being disaffected with its present state of contemplation of Intellect and in choosing to seek "more". Second, and perhaps more importantly, it is even more apostate in executing this choice in a direction away from priors. This choice to seek for "more" than its "present state" is futile and self-contradictory, for it is, in

[20] Trouillard, 131.
[21] Schürmann, 49.
[22] Trouillard, 127.

effect, a choice for less – a choice towards ontological loss. Soul satiates its choice by descending away from the One and generating time and the world of sense. While its *polupragmatic* nature undoubtedly spurs layers of ontological loss in soul, these laps of multiplicity are also tempered by soul's aspiratory mimesis of Intellect, which fetches it ontological gain. Soul copies Intellect's desire for autonomy from the One and its archetypal *ennui*, indicated in III.8(30).8 by its growing "heavy", which implies, as Torchia suggests, its boredom, drowsiness or intoxication.[23] That soul is thus copying its prior must rein in some of its multiplicity, for it is aspiratory in purpose.

While soul's *polupragmatic* nature is the first milestone in its exteriorization, a second is its "unquiet power" – and this may not be *polupragmatic*. Displaying signs of expediency that temper as well as enhance soul's multiplicity, it may play a more ambiguous role. In a second passage indicating the imbalance of the hypostasis soul, Plotinus claims:

2. For because soul had an unquiet power, which wanted to keep on transferring what it saw there to something else, it did not want the whole to be present to it all together.
(III.7(45).11)

In general Plotinus uses power (*dunamis*) in positive ways that temper multiplicity – the power from the Good, which Intellect is unable to hold and breaks up into many (VI.7(38).15), the power gained by abiding above (IV.3(27).6) and participating in the Good (III.2(47).3), and Intellect's power for disinterested generation (III.2(47).2). Plotinus also uses quietude in positive ways that indicate unity (III.2(47).2, III.7(45).11, III.8(30).6). Thus it would be ideal if soul possessed both power and quietude, or, a quiet power as it does when it ascends to the One. The One is "the productive power of all things" (III.8(30).10) that exceeds all individual powers (VI.7(38).32). In his passages on mysticism, Plotinus depicts the power in "oneself" as "akin" to the power from the One (VI.9(9).4).[24] Here the main predicate of this mimetic power and the essence of its similitude to the power from the One is the perfect quietude (*hêsuchia*) it derives from its transcendence of motion and intelligible shape. Such a hyper-noetic quiet power stands in stark contrast with the unquiet power (*dunamis ouch hêsuchos*) of soul in quotation 2.

Commentators have typically equated soul's unquiet power with its *tolma*. Strange suggests that the "unquiet power" of soul is its faculty of desire, based on a comparison of III.7(45).11 with IV.7(2).13 (beginning), IV.3(27).7, and VI.8(39).2, and comments that the association of the fall of soul from the intelligible realm with its desire to rule itself in III.7(45).11 is reminiscent of the

[23] Torchia, 77.

[24] As Bussanich notes, it is misleading to describe the power which comes from the One as the power in the One. See J. Bussanich, *The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 177.

fall of soul in V.1(10).1. Strange also identifies soul's unquiet power of desire with its *polupragmatic* nature.[25] Likewise, Torchia equates soul's *tolma* with its "unquiet power". He associates soul's "restless inquietude" with its "wearying" of its participation in the noetic world and its consequent ambitious and *tolmatic* desire to "create actively on its own".[26] Yet soul's unquiet power may logically precede its *polupragmatic* nature and differ fundamentally from other instances of exteriorization, given that it is attended by an acumen that expresses expediency. The hypostasis soul loses its balance of the same and the other owing to its internal imbalance, which infuses an exculpable pre-*tolmatic* otherness between itself and Intellect. This loss precedes its restlessness. At the very beginning, when soul appears, it is, as Nikulin points out, already unable to hold the equilibrium of the same and the other, which has "dissolved" into the separate one-*and*-many, unlike the indissoluble one-many of Intellect.[27] It is perhaps this imbalance of soul that accounts for its "unquiet power" more than its logically subsequent *polupragmatic* nature.

This thesis is ascertained insofar as soul's further descent in quotation 2, like that of Intellect, is expedient and non-*tolmatic*. Soul's disquiet indicates that it has ceased abiding entirely above. Soul can no longer imitate the "perfect quietude" of Intellect, even as it imitates Intellect's fall from the unity of the One. Just as Intellect breaks up the power from the One and makes this one power many, so that it might bear it part by part (VI.7(38).15), so also the hypostasis soul now copies Intellect and does not want "the whole to be present to it all together". This implies that it *prefers* a fragmented, discursive series of images of the real objects of knowledge it already knows. In this case of willful exteriorization, there is no audacity. Soul's refusal of the whole is a sign of expediency and acumen – like Intellect, soul accommodates the erstwhile "whole" to its fallen state and limited powers, so that it too can bear it bit by bit. This limited capacity of soul is noted by Trouillard as the inability of its power to bear the fullness of the pure Intellect by which it is generated,[28] echoed later by Schürmann, as soul's not being able to bear to retain within itself "all the dense fullness of its possession".[29]

Once again the multiplicity gained by soul in thus descending (from a vision of real being to discursive images) can be calibrated through a calculus of soul's ontological loss, leading to results that are nuanced. That soul has power is ontologically positive, but the disquiet of this power points to loss. Soul's unquiet power is the author of three things: (1) its brief contemplation of eternity or the intelligible realm it "saw there", (2) its desire to transfer what it thus beheld, and

[25] Strange, 48, note 74.

[26] Torchia, 71, 75.

[27] D. Nikulin, "Plotinus on Eternity", *Le Timée de Platon*, A. Neschke-Hentschke (ed.) (Paris: Éditions Peeters Louvain, 2000), 29.

[28] Trouillard, 131.

[29] Schürmann, 48.

(3) its desire for the whole not to be present to it all together. That soul's unquiet power "saw" the intelligible realm is a motion of aspiration that should fetch ontological gain. That it "saw" the noetic realm despite its disquiet, indicates a fleeting contemplation that rises like a phoenix amidst the ashes of descent, endowing soul with a redolent fecundity that should temper the multiplicity wrought by soul's overall imbalance and *polupragmatic* dearth. This is reminiscent of IV.7(2).13, where the lower soul "sees" Intellect despite its descended state, thus revealing the mobility inherent in contemplation. However, if this vision of soul's unquiet power in III.7(45).11 is purely instrumental and expedient – if it saw eternity and the intelligible realm only so as to copy these as images in the realm of becoming – then its ontological gain and fecundity should be less than if it "saw" Intellect out of a pure teleological and *epistrophic* yearning for its noetic ground and ontological prior (Intellect). From Plotinus' words concerning the World Soul in II.9(33).4 – "For what is the source of its making, if not what it saw in the intelligible world?" – it should be clear that here in III.7(45).11 soul may very well be instrumental and expedient, rather than teleological and *epistrophic*. Soul "sees" the intelligible realm in order to make the world, for its vision of this realm is the "source of its making".

Likewise, the desire of soul's unquiet power to "keep on transferring" what it saw "there" – which, as Schürmann notes, is the intelligible world[30] – to "something else" (the realm of becoming), could stem from a host of reasons. First, it is aspiratory, if soul seeks this transfer out of contemplative yearning for its noetic ground and a wistful longing for its erstwhile objects of knowledge, seeking to perpetrate this now lost vision which it already knows. Such clear marks of aspiration should temper its ontological loss. However, this desire to transfer is also a downward motion that swerves away from participation in the Good. All it attempts to do is ontologically relocate soul's erstwhile vision of the noetic realm. Yet the object sought to be relocated (the vision) is distinct from the source beheld (the Intelligible realm), so that the purported result of this transfer is – not a relocated noetic realm *per se* – but the world of its analogous images. Inasmuch as this transfer aims at relocating and thus transmuting soul's vision to a world of images, this should fetch ontological loss. As desire itself and as a desire meant to bring about the world of images, this should be a desire for descent. Yet we know that for Plotinus the hypostasis soul never commits a transgression when it descends from the divine realm to continue the generation of the realm of process. To make at all, it has to "see" the intelligible realm. This keeps it from declination, as in the case of the World Soul in II.9(33).4. Thus even this apparent loss is a not a deficit. Soul seeks to transfer what it "sees" in the noetic realm to the fragmented, discursive realm of becoming, not so much out of aspiratory longing for its noetic ground, or the *tolmatic* desire to create, as to accommodate its descended state, out of a practical expedience that fetches neither culpability nor ontological loss.

[30] *Ibid.*

Moreover, insofar as soul is thereby copying the expedience of Intellect, its mimesis should be aspiratory and rein in any further multiplicity.

Polupragmatic Nature of World Soul

Like that of its priors, the emergence of the World Soul from soul-genus is non-*tolmatic*. However in III.7(45).11, its generation of its progeny, like that by the hypostasis soul, fetches a *tolmatic* otherness between itself and the realm of becoming in contradistinction with IV.8(6).6, where generation occurs by emanative decree, out of the overflow of power drawn from above – a power which could not begrudge itself in "selfish jealousy" – resulting in a quiet non-*tolmatic* otherness. Here too, Plotinus uses the metaphor of the unfolding seed but in a different way. The seed unfolds, not out of a *polupragmatic* self-extrusion, but, inherently, in accordance with Plotinus' *poietic* law, out of plenitude – there must not be just souls alone without the manifestation of the "things produced through" souls, "if this is in every nature, to produce what comes after it and to unfold itself as a seed does, from a partless beginning which proceeds to the final stage perceived by the senses". One indication that generation here is non-*tolmatic* is that the progenitor is able to abide "for ever in its own proper dwelling-place", instead of declining towards its progeny in a violent act of self-extrusion. There are several other passages that affirm the silence of the World Soul, indicative of its abiding in itself, remaining unmoved in its contemplation of Intellect and being untainted by its generation and governance of the sense-world. However, in III.7(45).11, the World Soul engages in a self-extrusion characteristic of the *polupragmatic* soul – it extends to a weaker extension of itself. Thus the *tolma* of the genus affects the World Soul enough to weaken it culpably when it generates time and the world of sense.

In a third passage indicating the imbalance of soul in III.7(45).11, Plotinus depicts this weakening of the World Soul:

> 3. As from a quiet seed the formative principle, unfolding itself, advances, as it thinks, to largeness, but does away with the largeness by division and, instead of keeping its unity in itself, squanders it outside itself and so goes forward to a weaker extension; in the same way Soul, making the world of sense in imitation of that other world, moving with a motion which is not that which exists There, but like it, and intending to be an image of it, first of all put itself into time, which it made instead of eternity, and then handed over that which came into being as a slave to time, by making the whole of it exist in time and encompassing all its ways with time. (III.7(45).11)

Here, as in the context of Intellect in III.2(47).2, Plotinus again uses the analogy with the *logos* in the seed. This seed is, as Armstrong notes, superior in its

concentrated unity to the full-grown plant.[31] The metaphor of the seed also suggests, as Schürmann points out, a unity that "bears in it possible multiplicity".[32] Like the quietude of soul prior to its imbalance and *polupragmatic* dearth, and in stark contrast with the disquiet of the power of the hypostasis soul – this seed has an incipient *quietude* in quotation 3. It loses its quietude when its *logos* unfurls in what appears like clearly a *tolmatic* direction and in a manner that is characteristically delusive – for it *thinks* it advances to largeness. Yet this can never be real largeness but only a thinning, or dilution, for it does away with the largeness by division – and this adds to its multiplicity. The clue to the later "squandering" lies in the division itself – for in "doing away with" its largeness it wastes its unity. This *spermatic logos* advances – not by accruing more power – but by dividing what it already has in its possession, thus thinning it by distending it further. By unraveling its potential multiplicity, it "squanders" its erstwhile unity and undergoes the violent self-extrusion characteristic of a *polupragmatic* nature. Plotinus' use of "squandering" and "going forward to a weaker extension" here is reminiscent of his use of "extended in scattering" in VI.6(34).1, associated with the exteriorization characteristic of multiplicity. In quotation 3, implicit in the "instead of" is a *tolmatic* preference for exteriorization over *stasis* and unity – this seed squanders its unity outside itself "instead of" keeping its unity in itself. This is reminiscent of the hypostasis soul, when it seeks "more than its present state", veers away from priors, and descends. Both choices are *tolmatic* and neither is prompted by the kind of expedience displayed by soul's unquiet power when it seeks to "not want the whole to be present to it altogether". As the "and so" indicates, Plotinus deems this fateful choice for exteriorization by the *spermatic logos* to be the direct cause of its weakening or ontological loss – "instead of keeping its unity in itself, squanders it outside itself *and so* goes forward to a weaker extension".[33] Of course, the larger causes include the *polupragmatic* nature that made it, in the first place, extrude out of itself in the direction in which it is veering. Indeed it *squanders*, for it disburses its unity "outside itself" – in a direction that can only lie below.

The sheer exteriorization of this inexpedient motion of the World Soul – which as Schürmann notes, is the same as its self-temporalization and loss of intensity[34] – manifests the *polupragmatic* nature of soul-genus, which it inherits through reverberation and mimesis.[35] Unlike the One and Intellect, whose very act

[31] *Plotinus Ennead III*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 48, note 1.

[32] Schürmann, 49.

[33] The italics are mine.

[34] Schürmann, 49.

[35] Soul-genus, at the core of the World Soul, has exteriorized itself, thus reverberating down to the level of its senior species soul. Yet, the Word Soul is also volitionally copying its genus.

of producing involves rest (*stasis*) (V.2(11).1) and unlike IV.3(27).6 where likewise, the World Soul itself abides in itself, here the added factor of the hypostasis soul's *polupragmatic* nature causes the World Soul to extrude itself forth out of itself and thus out of *stasis*, into a weaker extension. It generates sacrificially – at the cost of declining towards its progeny. This distention of the World Soul indicates, as Deck notes, that there is now a relaxation of the requirements of *poiesis* – "The immobility of the producer is mitigated, and thus its stability in the generation of its product is impaired".[36] As Torchia notes, here Augustine is comparable with Plotinus. Like the distended "Soul" uncoiling itself like a seed (Plotinus), the proud soul (Augustine) "spews forth" its inmost good (*per superbiam intima sua*).[37]

However, its weakening self-exteriorization in III.7(45).11 is unusual among Plotinus' usual narratives about the powers of World Soul, which lead one to expect it to abide unchanged when it generates. Rist points out that it is for the adversaries of Plotinus that the World Soul is capable of a moral lapse, leading to products that are the direct result of such lapse, so that the material world becomes "self-evidently" evil. Rist cites II.9(33).10, where Plotinus refers to the Gnostic view – perhaps Valentinian – that "the World Soul and a certain wisdom or Sophia 'declined' and entered the material world". Plotinus' own view of the World Soul is quite different. It is "an hypostasis of true Being; it does not enter the world of sense and change, but produces and creates that world from above". As Rist notes, Plotinus' view, that the World Soul does not descend and that its illumination is not a moral decline, is present not merely in his polemic against the Gnostics. There are several other passages that indicate that the World Soul remains above, leading Rist to assert that where the World Soul is concerned, there is no descent.[38] Likewise, Smith notes that Plotinus often points out how the World Soul both generates and manages the world without being affected by it – without toil and without reasoning out its actions.[39] Thus in III.2(47).2 the World Soul suffers no harm as it directs this All. In III.4(15).4, it abides, does not decline with its lower part and does not worry. In IV.3(27).6 it looks towards Intellect as a whole and abides in itself as it makes. And in II.9(33).2, it "orders body" but not through discursive thinking but by the "wonderful power" derived from its contemplation of its prior.

The World Soul's loss of *stasis* in III.7(45).11, is reminiscent of V.2(11).1, where the lower part of the hypostasis soul breaks the mold set by its priors and "does not abide unchanged when it produces: it is moved and so brings forth an

[36] Deck, 42.

[37] Torchia, 143.

[38] J.M. Rist, *Plotinus. The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 112–15.

[39] A. Smith, "Soul and Time in Plotinus", in *Psukhe – Seele – Anima*, J. Holzhausen (ed.) (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1998), 341.

image". Although there is no *polupragmatic* nature here – so that soul's motion is likely to be different from the World Soul's self-extrusion in III.7(45).11 – Plotinus does use *tolma*-language directly in V.2(11).2, where *tolma* prevails more as result than cause. The lower part of the hypostasis soul descends, not by *tolma*, but into a *tolmatic* state. The part of it that comes to exist in the lowest entities is *tolmatic* – in a plant it is audacious and in an animal irrational.

Scholars are divided on the culpability of the World Soul in quotation 3. At one extreme, Armstrong claims that the World Soul does not "fall" in III.7(45).11 and that as elsewhere in the *Enneads*, it continues to preside over the world of becoming generated in "noetic quietness".[40] At the other extreme, Torchia identifies two "factors" that add to the culpability of the World Soul – that Soul "temporalizes" itself by making time in imitation of eternity and that Soul makes "being subservient to the demands of temporality". The truth perhaps lies in between these two extremes. Any multiplicity accrued by the World Soul in quotation 3 should be calibrated carefully for the results may be nuanced. Notwithstanding its overall descent, the World Soul undergoes a threefold aspiratory mimesis of Intellect, its supreme prior, and this should stem the tide of its multiplicity. First, it intends its motion of self-exteriorization to be an image of intelligible motion – thus copying Intellect's unrolling away from the One in III.8(30).8. As Torchia notes: "Soul's gravitation toward the manifold displays a continuity with *Nous's* desire to possess all things .... Both *Nous* and Soul attempt to over-extend their proper range of activities".[41] Second, the World Soul copies the intelligible world to make the world of sense. Finally, the World Soul copies, not just the motion of Intellect, but its very exteriorization, both metaphysically as well as metaphorically. Plotinus applies the same metaphor of the *spermatic logos* to Intellect in a slightly later work, III.2(47).2, where he depicts an analogy between the exteriorization of the parts of the *spermatic logos*, which get diffused and disharmonious when exteriorized to the sphere of "bulk", and the exteriorization of this All from Intellect and the *logos* which proceeds from it.

Multiplicity is gained by the World Soul mainly in its weakening self-extension. From Plotinus' words in quotation 3 – that the World Soul exteriorizes "in the same way" as the *spermatic logos* – one can infer that like the latter, the former too squanders its unity or accrues multiplicity outside itself and goes forward to a weaker extension. The World Soul "squanders" its unity insofar as it makes time and the world of sense out of the reserve of fecundity already in its possession, without replenishing its fund through a direct contemplation of Intellect, as it does in IV.3(27).6 and II.3(52).18. This is because its contemplation of priors is now somewhat thwarted by its inherited *polupragmatic* nature, which weakens even this limited reserve of fecundity.[42] The World Soul's self-extension

[40] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 120.

[41] Torchia, 74.

[42] It is impossible that the World Soul's contemplation of priors be entirely thwarted, for

is "weakening", or fetches multiplicity – not only because it has ceased to abide in itself and is thinning itself – but also because of the direction in which it is moving. Like the lower part of the hypostasis soul, which veers towards its progeny in V.2(11).1, the "partial soul" in III.9(13).3, which becomes "more indefinite" when it generates matter, the World Soul itself in IV.3(27).9, which "sees" the darkness of matter, and the lower soul in IV.7(2).13 and particular souls in IV.3(27).6 – here in III.7(45).11, the World Soul declines towards its progeny, thus accruing further multiplicity. This direction is the arena "outside itself" wherein it squanders its unity and thereby also its power. Having ceased to abide in itself it loses power, for as Plotinus tells us in IV.3(27).6, "it is a mark of greater power not to be affected" in what the progenitor makes.

Within this exteriorized arena occurs also the World Soul's implicit encounter with matter. In order to make the world of sense it has to bequeath *logoi* onto the matter of the sense-world. This is how it squanders its unity outside itself – by extruding towards matter. Yet, its clear declination in III.7(45).11 cannot be caused by matter, as much as by the *polupragmatic* nature it inherits. If anything, it is aspiratory in conferring forms onto matter, for this entails its participation in the Good, which should, in turn, temper its multiplicity. Its encounter with matter perhaps affects its enmattered *logoi*, more than the World Soul itself. Here Armstrong's point[43] – that the cosmic or World Soul does not fall in its generation of the temporal world in III.7(45).11 and that all that descends is its "dianoetic" power or *logos* – becomes relevant, notwithstanding the difference in interpretation. Here the World Soul is indeed taken to *decline* – but not as far as matter. The analogy Plotinus establishes in quotation 3 is that between the *spermatic logos* and the World Soul itself – and not its *logoi* – so that it is the World Soul that descends into a weaker extension, but its *logoi* that decline all the way to matter.

In I.8(51).8 Plotinus suggests that the *logoi* "immanent in matter" are corrupted by their contact with matter – "Then, too, the forms in matter are not the same as they would be if they were by themselves; they are formative forces immanent in matter, corrupted in matter and infected with its nature". Matter "masters what is imaged in it" and corrupts and destroys it by imbuing upon the *logoi*, its own formless, shapeless, and measureless nature, until it has made the *logoi* belong to it. In fact, the World Soul would be endangered if, in bequeathing the *logoi*, it even looked at matter, for matter "infects with its own evil that which is not in it but only directs its gaze to it" (I.8(51).4). However, in quotation 3 the World Soul is protected from such contagion. Even if it perhaps veers towards matter, it does not contemplate it, for what it must look at during this decline is the noetic world it is copying and not the matter on which the *logoi* are to be bequeathed. Thus even as it extends to a weaker extension, its vision is directed

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then it could not imitate intelligible motion or design the world.

[43] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 120.

upwards. This is consonant with Plotinus' words in II.9(33).4, that the World Soul cannot fall: "The making act of the soul is not a declination but rather a non-declination" – for if it did, it would forget the intelligibles, in which case, it could not fashion the world. Thus where the impact of matter is concerned, Plotinus retains in III.7(45).11 his clear assertion in II.9(33).4 that the "Soul of the All" does not fall when it makes the world. Its implicit encounter with matter does not "infect" the World Soul. The subtle difference between a *tolmatic* nature and a *polupragmatic* one reveals itself particularly in the case of the World Soul. While in II.9(33).11 Plotinus claims that the World Soul does not create out of "arrogance and rash self-assertion", in III.7(45).11 the *polupragmatic* nature of its genus does affect the World Soul. The only fall it undergoes is its weakening self-extension caused, not by any explicit *tolmatic* arrogance, but by the restless nature of its genus.

Polupragmatic Nature and *Tolma* of Individual Souls

Taking into consideration the twofold otherness of individual souls – that with respect to their parent (the hypostasis soul) and their progeny (time and the world of sense) – *tolma* plays a different, possibly culpable role only in the latter otherness. In passages like IV.3(27).2, there are strains of a non-*tolmatic* otherness that separate individual souls from their parent (soul-genus). This seminal otherness is exacerbated, when souls descend on account of their *polupragmatic* nature and even more so when they sink into *tolmatic* worldliness. A fourth passage indicating the imbalance of soul follows immediately after quotation 1:

4. And so, always moving on to the "next" and the "after", and what is not the same, but one thing after another, we made a long stretch of our journey and constructed time as an image of eternity. (III.7(45).11)

As was concluded in Chapter 10 of this book, here the "we" comprises individual species souls. The "we" copies the second motion of the hypostasis soul – "this moved, and time moved with it" – the first being its motion of restlessness. The *polupragmatic* nature of the hypostasis soul devolves upon the "we",[44] which consequently lengthens its journey and constructs time. This motion is an affront to the individual soul's circumambulation around the One in loving aspiration (II.2(14).2). Thus the "we" shares in the burden of the *polupragmatic* nature of its parent. It is not evil thereby, for like its parent, it operates at its highest noetic species level where there is no evil. However, individual souls do carry an

[44] The "we" *qua* individual souls should exclude star souls, for these are not moved from their contemplation by the care of their bodies (IV.8(6).2). See Deck, 36–7.

additional independent toll of *tolma* – even evil – when they plunge into worldliness – a burden not shared by priors.

As Torchia notes, it is in V.1(10).1 that Plotinus expresses the *locus classicus* of *tolma*-language.[45] Plotinus first asks, what causes individual souls to "forget their Father God", and be ignorant of self and God, despite their divine origins. Presumably this happens because of evil. Using "*tolma*" directly, Plotinus then identifies the beginning of evil with four things pertaining to individual souls – their *tolma*, "coming to birth", first otherness and "wishing to belong to themselves":

> 4.1 The beginning of evil for them was audacity and coming to birth and the first otherness and the wishing to belong to themselves. Since they were clearly delighted with their own independence, and made great use of self-movement, running the opposite course and getting as far away as possible, they were ignorant even that they themselves came from that world. (V.1(10).1)

Atkinson identifies three moments in this "alienation of soul from Intellect" – first, *tolma* and coming to birth, etc., second, the pleasure in free-will after birth, and third, "continued wonderment at the physical world which causes as much separation to souls as is allowed to them".[46] Torchia attributes the descent of souls in this quotation to four factors – the act of self-will or *tolma*, the desire for self-ownership or self-determination, the desire for differentiation, and the entry into "the sphere of temporal process".[47] *Tolma*, translated by Armstrong and Atkinson as "audacity", was never evil among real beings. But now, for the first time it is identified with the beginning of "evil", which means the individual soul can no longer be at the noetic species level.[48]

In the same chapter Plotinus also claims that the "ignorance of God" by individual souls is caused by their "honor for these things here and their contempt for themselves", implying that the cosmos is already in existence along with its enticing "earthly things". As the rest of V.1(10).1 indicates, the individual souls' *tolmatic* cessation of contemplation and swerving away from Intellect, or the "father, God", by "running the opposite course and getting as far away as possible" involves more than the benign ontological loss, or limited dearth of the Good that demarcates cascading levels of real beings from the One.[49] It leads to the visible

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[45] Torchia, 79.

[46] M. Atkinson, *Plotinus Ennead V.1: On the Three Principal Hypostases* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 4.

[47] Torchia, 103.

[48] Atkinson, 1ii. As Atkinson, 5, notes, Plotinus' use of *tolma* in this passage owes more to the "Greek philosophical tradition than to Gnosis".

[49] Torchia , 92, note 28, takes the divine "father" in V.1(10).1 to be *nous*. This echoes the view of Atkinson, 1, that while Father and God can refer to both the One and Intellect, here father God perhaps means Intellect.

world and the worldliness attendant upon their dependence on "earthly things" and idolatrous "honor" of "everything rather than themselves", thus implying that this worldly *tolma* is clearly post-cosmic.[50] This means that while evil perhaps begins with a pre-cosmic and anterior "coming to birth" it is enhanced and leads to further otherness when souls become worldly in a cosmos already in existence. Such worldly *tolma* carries with it no shade of expedience and involves a culpable participation in evil, which should exacerbate the seminal otherness that already delineates individual souls from their genus.

In Atkinson's translation and commentary "coming to birth" and first otherness both refer to birth of individual souls themselves and the formation of soul from Intellect.[51] However, if we go by Torchia, who translates "coming to birth" as "the tendency toward temporal generation", then "birth" applies not to individual souls but their progeny.[52] The beginning of evil is associated, not with their own birth but with their generative act. "Coming to birth" cannot apply to the individual soul, for this emerges from the genus as a noetic species soul. If its appearance is indeed the beginning of evil then evil must taint the very inception of the genus-species structure of soul.[53] Yet, this can never be, for the species soul is a real being and a noetic entity and evil does not exist among real beings. This is evinced in the somewhat neutral and benign terms in which Plotinus draws an analogy between a science and its theorems and the genus-species structure of soul in IV.3(27).2 and the aspiratory manner in which this edifice of soul imitates the genus-species structure of Intellect and its constituent real beings (IV.8(6).3, V.9(5).6). Like Intellect, like the hypostasis soul, and perhaps like the World Soul as well – individual species souls should appear from their progenitor through an anterior, expedient, exculpable, non-*tolmatic* and non-evil otherness, which is then exacerbated through any voluntary and audacious individuation.

Thus in quotation 4.1 it should not be the appearance of the individual soul that is associated with the beginning of evil, but that of its progeny. Likewise, the "first otherness" in question should not be the wedge of multiplicity between individual souls and their genus, but that between them and their progeny in the world of becoming. However there are other passages of the *Enneads* which suggest what may be a *tolmatic* exacerbation of a pre-*tolmatic*, species level individuation of the individual soul – it can gain multiplicity if it individuates through ambition as indicated by those passages where individual souls generate as

[50] "Pre-cosmic" means prior to the appearance of the cosmos. "Post-cosmic" is that which comes after the cosmos is already in place.

[51] Atkinson, 1ii, 7.

[52] Torchia, 79–80.

[53] "Coming to birth", if it did pertain to the individual soul, would have to refer to its *first* appearance and not its reincarnation, for Plotinus associates "coming to birth" with "first otherness" in quotation 4.1.

well as individuate themselves through *tolmatic* eagerness.[54] Such irregular individuation perhaps enhances the primary particularization already in place with the appearance of the species soul from soul-genus. Thus in IV.7(2).13 the descended soul is "eager to make" and "constructs the world". It grows isolated and individuated if it desires to direct a mere part of the All.[55] Again in IV.8(6).4, such isolation means weakness. The very individuation of souls is *tolmatic* and replete with *ennui* and the desire for autonomy. Souls change from being the whole to being a part and each go to their own, "belonging to themselves", as if "tired" of being together. When an individual soul flies from the All, standing apart in distinctness and ceasing to contemplate Intellect – it falls from what is presumably the noetic species level and becomes a part – perhaps at a further level of particularization. It is "isolated and weak and fusses and looks towards a part", and directs the individual part with difficulty. Finally, in IV.4(28).3, if the individual soul "cannot endure unity" and emerges out of the intelligible world in a *polupragmatic* manner – embracing its own individuality, wanting to be different, and putting "its head outside" as it were – it acquires memory. Such willful and seemingly culpable individuation entails that its two levels of otherness be related for the individual soul. Its effort to carve otherness with respect to its progeny may cause that with respect to its prior. In straining to beget and "direct the part" and thus carve otherness between itself and the "part", it individuates itself perhaps further than the species level, thereby incurring a willful otherness between itself and its prior. This is different from III.7(45).11 where, having already appeared, individual species souls *beget* through the *polupragmatic* nature they inherit from the genus – a nature that can never be evil, given the noetic stature of the structure of soul. It is also different from quotation 4.1 (V.1(10).1) where the individual soul can gain its own (independent) further toll of *tolma* through worldliness.

Notwithstanding this association of ambition and isolation with the particular soul's descent in passages like IV.8(6).4–5, IV.7(2).13 and others, it is not yet clear if they explain adequately the connotation of evil in V.1(10).1. Chapters like IV.3(27).12, where "souls of men" leap into embodiment when enchanted with their images in the mirror of Dionysus, do not entail any association with evil, for souls remain in contact with Intellect and thus free from evil. Even chapters like IV.8(6).4, where souls when individuated are *tolmatic* in "belonging to themselves", may not express the stark culpability required for generation of souls and generation by souls to be evil, although the descent here entails departure from the noetic level, thus leaving open the possibility of evil. As Deck notes, regarding

[54] Armstrong points out that the sin and fall of individual souls was part of the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition from the beginning. Plotinus develops and adapts the "ancient common doctrine". See Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 118.

[55] As stated in Chapter 8 of this book, this indicates a mode of individuation of souls quite different from the generation of species souls from the genus in IV.3(27).2, and III.9(13).1.

IV.8(6).4, Plotinus' language might suggest that the "departure" of individual souls from soul-entire is voluntary and avoidable. Yet, this descent is also understood to be necessary. The individual soul's descent can be "eternally necessary by the law of nature" (IV.8(6).5). In such a case the descent is freely caused by soul's own nature, but also necessitated by the law of its nature. Thus the association with evil in V.1(10).1 may not be supported even by IV.8(6).4–5, wherein souls' freedom is nestled within necessity. At best, the evil in V.1(10).1 may be correlated with the "crime" the soul commits in descending into body in IV.8(6).5, when it goes down by its "own motion" and is "punished" by the very experience of the descent, which may give the soul "knowledge of evil". Yet, unlike quotation 4.1 (V.1(10).1), where "coming to birth" *qua* generation itself is the beginning of evil, here in IV.8(6).5 the individual soul need not be harmed by "coming to know the nature of wickedness", so long as it "escapes quickly" from its volitional descent caused by its generative purpose of setting in order "what comes after it". As Deck notes, here Plotinus is almost saying that the individual soul can descend to the sensible without contamination and that it comes here only to perform its proper function, which is the ordering of the body using powers that would have been in vain in the incorporeal world.[56] Using IV.8(6).5, one might qualify quotation 4.1 (V.1(10).1) and conclude that the individual soul's *tolma*, "coming to birth", "first otherness" and "wishing to belong to themselves" are associated with the beginning of evil, but only *conditionally* – only when soul gets enmeshed in the worldliness of the world and fails to escape quickly. This may reconcile the "uneasy balance" between two positions regarding individual souls, ascribed by Torchia to Plotinus – that souls on the one hand are "free, fallen, and culpable", and on the other, are "determined, sent, and blameless".[57]

In quotation 4.1, Plotinus also deems as the beginning of evil, souls' post-cosmic desire for autonomy, or "wishing to belong to themselves", reminiscent of the hypostasis soul's pre-cosmic, *tolmatic* desire for autonomy in quotation 1. That their search for autonomy is culpable – and certainly not exculpably expedient – is demonstrated in V.1(10).1 by the *tolmatic* revelry of individual souls. "Delighted with their own independence", they "made great use of self-movement, running the opposite course and getting as far away as possible". *Tolma* manifested in this pall of misguided delight and eager, autonomous motion away from priors thus causes ignorance of their divine origins – "they were ignorant even that they themselves came from that world". This is why such a "wishing to belong to themselves", is the beginning of evil. The "self-movement" in question is the post-cosmic motion away from priors towards the worldliness of an immanent world already in existence. Yet this is a limited decline for individual souls get away only as far as is "possible", or allowed to them, and break themselves loose only as far as they can – for to *be* at all, they must remain tethered to the higher world. Their motion

[56] Deck, 38–9.
[57] Torchia, 87.

is *autonomous* with respect to priors – and thus characterized by Plotinus as a "self-movement" – because it is *tolmatic*. Its direction is certainly *tolmatic*, for individual souls run "the opposite course", away from divine origins, towards the "earthly things" they are enchanted by. Their "wishing to belong to themselves" fructifies in their breaking "loose" culpably – out of *contempt* for "that from which they turned away". Such culpability and worldliness render this aspect of the self-extrusion of individual souls distinct from the pre-cosmic, *polupragmatic*, necessitated motion of the "we" *qua* species souls in quotation 4 (III.7(45).11).

Armstrong discerns between *tolma* at the levels of Intellect and soul. Insofar as it is further from the Good, the descent of the generative part or power of soul has a "somewhat more ambiguous" audacity than that of Intellect.[58] At the level of individual souls however, audacity is perhaps more than merely "ambiguous". Very likely, it is keener than that of all priors, for it can entail burdens of evil and worldliness in addition to the *polupragmatic* restlessness inherited from priors. This interpretation – that individual souls are imitative, yet fundamentally different from all priors in their *tolma* – is contrary to that of Torchia, for whom Plotinus' discussion of the descent of individual souls is allied to and bears a "kinship" with his treatment of "*Nous's* severance from the One". Moreover, Torchia also claims that the *polupragmatic* "Soul" in III.7(45).11 exhibits characteristics similar to those of individual souls "driven" by *tolma* in V.1(10).1.[59] By contrast, here in this work, the two are discerned. Unlike their priors, individual souls in the *Enneads* are understood to bear a threefold *tolma* – that inherited from the *polupragmatic* nature of soul-genus (III.7(45).11), that derived from not escaping quickly after ordering the world (IV.8(6).5), and that acquired through a post-cosmic worldliness of souls (V.1(10).1). Applying "coming to birth" and "first otherness" only to the progeny of souls (and not to souls themselves), in this work, the implicit *polupragmatic* nature, generative act, and quest for autonomy of the "we" *qua* individual species souls in III.7(45).11 are discerned from the *tolma*, "coming to birth", first otherness, and wishing to belong to themselves in V.1(10).1. Only the latter are associated with the beginning of evil, for in V.1(10).1, individual souls implicitly descend from their noetic species status, forfeit the immunity attendant upon real beings, and thus become capable of evil. *Tolma* now means a serious and culpable dearth of the Good. When they fail to escape quickly after ordering the body and are thus culpable amidst the necessity of their progenitive descent (IV.8(6).5) and when they sink into worldliness (V.1(10).1), individual souls acquire still further post-cosmic *tolma* which is evil.

In V.1(10).1 yet another reason for the association of generation or "coming to birth" with evil may be the individual souls' implicit progenitive encounter with the matter of the sense-world. Likewise the "we" in III.7(45).11constructs not only time, but, implicitly also the world of sense. This entails an unavoidable encounter

[58] Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", 121.
[59] Torchia, 80, 103.

with matter that can begin with a mere look.[60] This implicit encounter, which Plotinus does not reveal in either V.1(10).1 or III.7(45).11, is explicit in other passages, where Plotinus depicts both pre- and post-cosmic encounters with matter. In I.8(51).14 Plotinus explores the progenitive relationship between matter and soul and the nature of what is perhaps soul's pre-cosmic fall into matter. Matter "begs"[61] soul, "bothers" it and with characteristic *tolmatic* intrusiveness, "wants to come right inside":

> 4.2 Matter darkens the illumination, the light from that source, by mixture with itself, and weakens it by itself offering it the opportunity of generation and the reason for coming to matter; for it would not have come to what was not present. This is the fall of the soul, to come in this way to matter and to become weak, because all its powers do not come into action; matter hinders them from coming by occupying the place which soul holds and producing a kind of cramped condition, and making evil what it has got hold of by a sort of theft – until soul manages to escape back to its higher state. (I.8(51).14)

Here, the soul in question cannot be the World Soul, for this cannot be evil. By implication it must be the individual soul which is thus evil because it has already fallen from its noetic species state and lacks the immunity of the World Soul. It weakens if it comes to matter, for matter stifles its powers and thieves in its

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[60] Even to look at matter is to acquire or "have" matter, for as Plotinus tells us in I.8(51).4, matter "infects with its own evil that which is not in it but only directs its gaze to it". That which "looks" at matter is denuded of form, being and rationality – this is the "infection" in question. The apprehension of sensible matter by the human intellect is a sub-rational process, for matter cannot provide the latter with any intelligible content, since it is formless: "By absolutely taking away all form, we call that in which there is no form matter; in the process of taking away all form we apprehend formlessness in ourselves, if we propose to look at matter" (Chapter 9). This weakened intellect is reminiscent of the "spurious reasoning" that apprehends matter in Plato's *Timaeus* (52B2) (II.4(12).10), depicted by Carroll as an "intellectless" intellect devoid of all form and being. See W. J. Carroll, "Plotinus on the Origin of Matter", in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, M.F. Wagner (ed.) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 184. This sub-rational human intellect can be presumptuous or *tolmatic* in looking at matter. In Chapter 4 Plotinus contrasts the "perfect soul", which "directs itself" to Intellect, away from matter, thus remaining "pure" and wholly defined by Intellect, with the imperfect "ghost of the first soul", which "has" matter by looking at it and is filled with "indefiniteness". In Chapter 9 Plotinus uses *tolma*-language to depict the presumptuousness of the post-cosmic individual human intellect, which, by daring to see matter, or "what is not its own", ceases to be intellect.

[61] This may be reminiscent of Plato's *Symposium* (203B4), where Poverty, the mother of Eros, comes begging to the feast of the gods. As Armstrong suggests, this interpretation of Poverty as matter is pre-Plotinian. Thus Plutarch identifies Plenty and Poverty, the parents of Love, with intelligible reality and matter. Plotinus uses Poverty differently in different places, in accordance with his philosophical purpose. Here, in I.8(51).14, as in III.6(26).14, Poverty is the matter of the sense-world. See *Plotinus Ennead III*, 182–3, 268–9.

encounter with it. This impact of matter is distinct from the impacts of *tolma* and restlessness, with both matter and *tolma* being possibly evil for the individual soul.[62]

In quotation 4.2, the generative act to be undertaken by soul appears worse than that by the "we" in III.7(45).11. In fact it is entirely negative for it is enticed by matter rather than occurring through any inherited *polupragmatic* nature. Although akin in its negativity to the ambitious individuation of soul in IV.8(6).4 or the individual soul's "straining" to direct a part in IV.7(2).13, the fall here is yet different, for the onus for soul's descent rests entirely with the matter of the sense-world. Matter is the "cause" of soul's "weakness and vice" (I.8(51).14). Characterized as it is by temptation and surrender, the generation in question here is dissolute compared to the generous overflow of activity attendant upon generation by real beings. Matter *tempts* soul by offering it the opportunity of generation and soul succumbs. Although incapable of free-will, matter here seethes with culpable *tolmatic* dealings – it offers the opportunity of generation to soul, hinders the fruition of its powers, and makes "evil what it has got hold of by a sort of theft". Matter maintains these *tolmatic* clutches until soul "manages to escape" back to its higher noetic state. In fact, very likely, generation here remains unconsummated, for in a related early passage in III.6(26).14, matter's *tolmatic* self-assertion is characteristically futile.

Matter in itself is not *tolmatic*, for that which is altogether bereft of the Good cannot swerve audaciously away from the Good, cease the contemplation it never had, or fall any lower. Yet matter's "actions" in quotation 4.2 (I.8(51).14) are *tolmatic* and this is corroborated by III.6(26).14, where Plotinus ascribes *tolma* overtly to a self-assertive "rapacious" matter, "destitute of the good", which he identifies with "Poverty", alluding to the mother of Eros in Plato's *Symposium* (203B ff.), to represent its dearth of form and being. Poverty is, in Torchia's words, the "personalization of ontological privation". Plotinus contends that matter's self-assertive attempt to seize what it lacks is *tolmatic*:

> 4.3 This other thing by its presence and its self-assertion and a kind of begging and its poverty makes a sort of violent attempt to grasp, and is cheated by not grasping, so that its poverty may remain and it may be always begging. (III.6(26).14)

Here what matter seeks to grasp violently are mere images of forms. Its failure runs deep for it does not even ask for what the giver has to give – namely the forms themselves. Unlike the *tolmatic polupragmatic* nature of soul that succeeds in triggering the realm of becoming in III.7(45).11, the *tolma* of matter here remains characteristically barren, thus rendering its violent "surge" quite ineffectual. As Deck notes, matter has no power and the very idea that it tries to "seize" being and

[62] While *tolma* need not be evil, the matter of the sense-world is evil. Matter is not inherently *tolmatic*, although it displays what seems like a *tolmatic* surge in III.6(26).14.

intelligibility has to be "metaphorical".[63] Ironically, in this instance, matter is comparable with real beings. The *tolma* of matter remains redundant like that of real beings, for which *tolma* neither carves out a first otherness, nor generates progeny. Mirror-like, matter merely "checks" the procession, thus rendering even its "rapaciousness" utterly ineffectual.

Combining 4–4.3 together, a narrative emerges. The largely hypothetical weakening of the individual soul, upon its progenitive encounter with matter (I.8(51).14), should almost complete the incipient pre-cosmic *tolmatic* descent of the "we" *qua* individual species souls in III.7(45).11. This "we" perhaps corresponds to the highest, pre-cosmic level of individual souls implicit in V.1(10).1 – immediately upon their own "coming to birth" when they are still at the species level and have not yet descended to embodiment. In III.7(45).11 the "we" launches into discursion, copying the hypostasis soul and constructing time. Its lengthening its journey and motion from the "next" to the "after" is the self-extrusive movement characteristic of the *polupragmatic* nature it inherits from the genus. Yet, this recalcitrant nature may not be the only catalyst – the individual soul may descend still further if it strains eagerly to beget and falls into the clutches of matter, without escaping quickly.[64] It does not yet bear the further multiplicity acquired through the post-cosmic, *tolmatic* worldliness of individual souls in V.1(10).1. This should exacerbate and complete the descent of the individual soul and its toll of multiplicity within the range stipulated by its orbit, described by Plotinus in phrases like "as far away as possible".

Conclusion

The One and Intellect overflow in the archetypal manner – silently, without spilling themselves forth. Intellect emerges from the One with a quiet otherness. Likewise the hypostasis soul emerges from an Intellect that maintains the quietude of self-containment. Even the *tolma* of Intellect, posterior to its appearance, may not be loud, for it is decreed by emanative necessity. The hypostasis soul's

[63] Referring to this passage, Torchia, 83–4, suggests that matter exhibits a "*tolmatic* surge". Torchia also points out that this presence of *tolma* at the level of matter is "intriguing", for here it can be directed only upwards, unlike its characteristic downward motion in the case of real beings. Thus this *tolmatic* surge of matter represents the beginning of the ascent *to* the One, which counterbalances the procession *from* the One. This last point made by Torchia should be countered by the notion expressed by Deck, 114, that matter's striving to seize being is merely "metaphorical".

[64] See Torchia, 85–6, for a comparison between *tolma* and *prothumia* or "eager desire". Torchia suggests that while *tolma* is a "blameworthy act", *prothumia* is a spontaneous response to the necessity of soul's descent. Here however, soul's eagerness to beget is being treated as *tolmatic* in its ambitious individuation. And *tolma*, while it is a will to apostasy, is not itself apostate, for it is understood to be necessary rather than entirely free.

polupragmatic nature is still louder – for audacity has replaced expediency and the *epistrophic* urge is reversed. Yet, insofar as soul remains noetic, even its violent self-extrusion is ultimately emanative and necessary. Culpability cannot be ascribed to noetic real beings, which have no free-will and are bereft of evil. Time does not "fall" from eternity. Rather, it is exteriorized, thus maintaining the "general drift of the vocabulary of procession".[65] In III.7(45).11, the genesis of time and the world of sense through the edifice of soul remains a refractive and mimetic cameo of the efflux from the One – only somewhat distorted and louder.

The cacophony of *tolma* resounds mainly in the post-cosmic worldly world below the realm of real beings. Here it applies to embodied individual souls whose *epistrophic* urge is weakened culpably in their revelry amidst enchanting earthly things. *Tolma* becomes more harmful, the further an entity drifts from the One and the weaker its power of return to the One.[66]

[65] Schürmann, 49.

[66] It is fitting to conclude with Rist's words – that the emanation from the One is perfect, while that from *nous* is less perfect, given its weaker capacity for unity. At the level of "Soul", the urge to return to origins is not strong enough to prevent "self-centeredness". Such "self-centeredness and forgetfulness" which are causes for evil for all souls, may be called *tolma* in the Neopythagorean sense of the term. J.M. Rist, "Monism: Plotinus and Some Predecessors", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 69 (1965): 342.

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Chapter 13

Pantomime

Plotinus' narrative in III.7(45)11 is a cryptogram of a larger play – one with many more *dramatis personae* than meets the eye. Unique in his cosmology for its inclusion of the *polupragmatic* soul, it is a complex drama that calls for the subtlest philosophical archeology to unearth the manifold buried scenes lurking beneath the facade. The conjoint genesis of time and the world of sense remain mantic, notwithstanding its lowly position in the efflux from the One. To stage this foreground genesis, several ulterior scenes have had to transpire quietly. From the background, they continue to shed cognitive light and illumine this frontispiece of Plotinian cosmology. By comprehending them, we integrate, silhouette and forge this rich *milieu* into an incisive heuristic tool – one that beams its brightest hermeneutic searchlight to probe the very roots of the cosmological foreground in III.7(45).11. The result can be only exhilarating: an archeology that decodes this cryptogram, sloughs away the surface, and regales us with the lush tapestry of Plotinus' cosmology. When illumined by these hidden scenes and retold with the greatest hermeneutic vigor, the narrative in III.7(45).11–13 illustrates the subtlety of Plotinus' thinking and the architectonic integrity between his higher and lower ontology. That this foreground cosmological scene is an adumbration of its hidden foundations demonstrates the holism and completeness of Plotinus' cosmology.

Seismic echoes of buried scenes – of Plotinus' higher ontology, soul, self, nature, matter and the apostate gestures of *tolma* – resound through the blithe front of III.7(45).11. When recounted through these submerged ramparts, Plotinus' cosmology in *Ennead* III.7(45).11–13 chronicles in assiduous details a much fuller story. Far, far behind this foreground scene, well beyond eternity, overflows the One – silently, neither spilling forth, nor exhausting itself. The clear light of truth filters through the pristine appearance of the two lower principles or hypostases and fades, the further one gets from the One. An ontological, causative and progenitive order, or *taxis*, determined by emanative necessity, choreographs the graceful succession of appearances flowing from the light of the Simplex all the way to time and the cosmos. The eternal *poiesis* of the edifice of soul and self has been quietly pre-arranged to herald the eternal, coeval birth of time and the cosmos. In the twilight of this moribund, pre-cosmic phase of the procession, first, the hypostasis soul, rapt in its eternal contemplation of Intellect, particularizes its species souls. Then nature appears and the matter of the sense-world follows, if it has an appearance at all! The procession unfurls further as becoming and alteration

appear. Finally, a demiurgic soul, *pace* Intellect, operating through the unity of soul, makes time and the world of sense. Without deliberating, "she" bequeaths the *logoi* that confer forms and their attendant qualities onto a formless matter that receives qualities without being qualified. The species souls actualize soul-genus so they can engage in this generative act.

The only turbulence in this tranquil flow occurs at beleaguering moments of an apostate *tolma* that spurs a cacophony of irrational tones in the otherwise rational and silent emanation from the One. The hypostasis soul undergoes a *tolmatic* "restlessly active nature" that incites the desire for autonomy and the recalcitrant motion of soul typical of such a restless or busy (*polupragmatic*) nature. Copying the expediency of Intellect, an *unquiet* power of soul seeks to transfer its noetic vision to the realm of process and prefers to fragment its objects of knowledge to discursive images of the noetic objects it already knows. Soul's *tolmatic* motion reverberates through the edifice of soul as the hypostasis soul launches into a sempiternal discursion, followed imitatively by the World Soul and the "we" *qua* particular species souls. "We" then lengthen our journey through discursion, draw time out of its *logoic* fore-life and *construct* time as an image of eternity. The World Soul squanders its unity, unravels itself to a weaker extension and copies noetic motion as it makes time and a mimetic world of sense, immersing this world in time.

An ontological night descends as the curtain rises over the pantomime of the cosmic world. Ensouled bodies scurry across time, seizing their phantom existence in the mirror of a phantom matter. The self *qua* soul, which has descended from its noetic height to adopt the mantle of the *eidôlon* and sculpt the historical "we", recounts through discursive reason how its antecedent – the noetic species "we" – constructed time, when it was still one with the World Soul, in the unity of soul.

In the distant horizon, far behind the pandemonium of warring *logoi*, seething desires and teeming multiplicity in the foreground scene, the quiet murmur of noetic verities prevails amidst the sheer silence of the One!

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